
Hot
Pants
Do
it
yourself
gynecology
Herbal Remedies



H O T P A N T S

This is the English adaptation of *C'est toujours chaud dans les culottes des filles*, by Isabelle Gauthier.

This edition was collectively written by Isabelle Gauthier and Lisa Vinebaum.

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Individual and bulk orders of *Hot Pants* can be obtained by writing the address below; please enclose $2 per individual booklet. Donations are welcome to subsidize the distribution costs to women who cannot afford to buy *Hot Pants*.

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Isabelle Gauthier holds a degree in herbal therapy. She studied with Joyce Rediker of le Grand Monde des Herbes in Montréal, and is an herbal practitioner with several years of active experience.

Lisa Vinebaum is a community radio activist. She has been using herbal therapy on herself and other selected victims for a number of years.



Disclaimer : This booklet is not intended to provide diagnoses or prescriptions. It is an informational guide to help you better understand your body and your health. Keep in mind that plants are not drugs, though they can be very powerful, and their effects cannot be guaranteed as they vary from woman to woman. The remedies contained in this booklet are based on the personal experiences of the authors, however, they cannot be held responsible for any adverse effects resulting from the use of these treatments. If in doubt, do not hesitate to consult an herbal practitioner, naturopath, physician or gynecologist.

Catherine Ouest, Suite 202, Montréal Qc, H3B 1K1; (514) 954-0170

CEPAVIH : 3600 rue Hôtel-de-Ville, Montréal Qc, H2X 3B6; (514) 282-9991; 282-9888

Coalition des organismes communautaires québécois de lutte contre le sida : 4332-A, rue Saint-Denis, Montréal Qc, H2J 2K8; (514) 844-2477

Ontario

Voices of Positive Women : P.O. Box 471 Stn. C, Toronto Ont, M6J 3P5; (416) 324-8703

Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention : 597 Parliament Street, Suite 103, Toronto Ont, M4X 1W3; (416) 926-0122

Two-Spirited People of the First Nations Native AIDS Awareness Project : 2 Carleton Street, Suite 1006, Toronto Ont, M5B 1J3; (416) 944-9300

Alliance for South Asian AIDS Prevention : 399 Church Street, 3rd Floor, Toronto Ont, M5T 1S2; (416) 351-0131

Positive Youth Outreach : c/o Church Street Community Center, 519 Church Street, Toronto Ont, M4Y 2C9; (416) 327-7433

Prostitute's Safer Sex Project : P.O. Box 1143 Stn. F, Toronto Ont, M4Y 2T8; (416) 964-0150

AIDS Action Now! : 517 College Street, Suite 321, Toronto Ont, M6G 1A8; (416) 928-2206

Toronto PWA Foundation : 399 Church Street, 2nd Floor, Toronto Ont, M5B 2J6; (416) 506-1400

AIDS Committee of Toronto : same address as above, 4th Floor; (416) 340-2437

AIDS Committee of Ottawa : 207 Queen Street, 4th Floor, Ottawa Ont, K1P 6E5; (613) 238-5014

AIDS Committee of London : 343 Richmond Street #301, London Ont, N6A 3C2; (519) 434-1601

AIDS Committee of Cambridge, Kitchener/Waterloo and Area : 123 Duke St. East, Kitchener Ont, N2H 1A4; (519) 570-3687

AIDS Committee of Windsor : P.O. Box 2233, Windsor Ont, N8Y 4R8; (519) 973-0222

Kingston AIDS Project : 113 Johnson Street, Kingston Ont, K7L 1X9; (613) 545-3698

Peterborough AIDS Resource Network : P.O. Box 1582, Peterborough Ont, K97 7H7; (705) 749-9110

Hamilton AIDS Network for Dialogue and Support : 143 James St. South #900, Hamilton Ont, L8P 3A1; (905) 528-0854

AIDS Committee of Sudbury : 23 Durham Street, Sudbury Ont, P3C 5E2; (705) 688-0505

AIDS Committee of North Bay and Area : 240 Algonquin Ave. #202, North Bay Ont, P1B 4V9; (705) 497-3560

AIDS Committee of Thunder Bay : 217 South Algoma Street, Thunder Bay Ont, P7B 3C3; (807) 345-1516

Central/Prairies

Feather of Hope Aboriginal AIDS Prevention Society : c/o AIDS Network of Edmonton Society; (403) 488-5773

AIDS Network of Edmonton Society : 11465 Jasper Ave. #201, Edmonton AB, T2R 0B7; (403) 488-5742

AIDS Calgary Awareness Association : 1201 10th Ave. SW #300, Calgary AB, T2R 0B7; (403) 228-0198

AIDS Regina : 2237 Smith Street, Regina Sask, S4P 2P5; (306) 924-8420

Body Positive Coalition of Manitoba : 220 Osborne Street, Winnipeg MA, R3L 1Z3; (204) 452-7704

Village Clinic : 668 Croydon Ave., Winnipeg MA, R3M 0X7; (204) 453-0045

Pacific

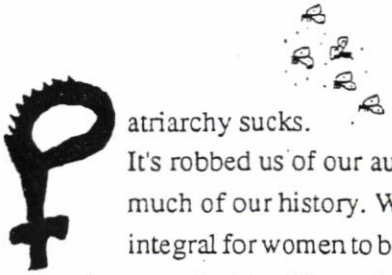
Positive Women's Network : c/o Pacific AIDS Resource Centre; (604) 893-2200

Pacific AIDS Resource Centre : 1107 Seymour Street, Vancouver BC, V6B 5S8; (604) 893-2210

Healing Our Spirit BC First Nations AIDS Society : 2525 Manitoba Street #201, Vancouver BC, V5Y 1P3; (604) 879-0906

AIDS Yukon Alliance : 3159 3rd Ave., Whitehorse Yukon, Y1A 1G1; (403) 633-2437





Patriarchy sucks. It's robbed us of our autonomy and much of our history. We believe it's integral for women to be aware and in control of our own bodies. The recipes we present here have been known and practised for centuries, passed down from mother to daughter, and have survived the censorship of the witch hunts. Our intent is simple and practical: to help break away from the medical establishment's tentacular grip on our bodies and our approaches to health and healing.

From anatomy to self-healing using herbs and massage, it is filled with easy recipes and remedies to conquer yeast infections, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), hormonal imbalances, late periods... a whole array of medicinal plants and nutritional information to arm us against abusive and negligent medical practices. A section on aphrodisiac plants has been added for your fancy.

Because the world of women's health is vast and multi-faceted, we had to prioritize the selection of material. We decided to focus on sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted pregnancies, and more specific gynecological problems as there is a lack of alternative literature on these subjects. Other aspects of women's health (menopause, fertility, pregnancy, psychological aspects, etc...). while extremely important, are too exhaustive for us to cover here.

Bear in mind that staying healthy depends on good nutrition and lifestyle, even in matters such as STDs. Poverty, abuse and living in a crazed soceity make us easy targets for all kinds of unwanted invaders—including the medical establishment.

Hot Pants is the English adaptation of *C'est toujours chaud dans les culottes des filles* (second edition). This booklet is an introduction to basic herbal therapy ; it's a manner of getting to know different medicinal plants and their properties, and figuring out which ones work best for each of us.

Many of the treatments outlined in this booklet will not be enough to eliminate certain chronic conditions. If you find yourself in this situation, you may want to opt for more advanced herbal approaches. Consult books written by other witches and healers who escaped the stake. Or perhaps take a closer look at homeopathy, acupuncture, etc, all of which are valuable methods of healing, especially when used as long-term treatments.

While these treatments are specifically recommended for women, many of them can also be applied to men.

The last sections "How to Prepare and Use Herbs" and "Herbal Properties and Dosages," contain explanations, methods of preparation (infusions, decoctions, tinctures...) and above all, the characteristics and ways of using the herbs mentioned in this booklet. While it may be tempting to skip ahead to the treatments suggested, it is EXTREMELY IMPORTANT that you read these sections. Herbs are very powerful and it's important that you understand how they work, how to prepare them, and when to avoid using certain plants.

Finally to end on a beau-tea-ful note, there's a list of useful addresses (herb and book stores, clinics) as well as reference books on the subject.

We hope this booklet will inspire you to seek out more alternative information and explore your options.

At your cervix!



Women's Institute Federation of PEI : P.O. Box 1058, Charlottetown PEI, C1A 7M4; (902) 368-4860

Québec

Québec Native Women's Association : 1450 rue City Councillors, Suite 440, Montréal Qc, H3A 2E5; (514) 844-9618
Women's Center of Montréal : 3585, rue Saint-Urbain, Montréal Qc; (514) 842-4780
Women's Health Center : 16 rue Saint-Joseph Est, Montréal Qc; (514) 842-8903
Clinique Alternative : 2034 rue Saint-Hubert, Montréal Qc; (514) 281-9848

Ontario

Hassle Free Clinic for Women : 566 Church Street, Toronto Ont; (416) 922-0566
Canadian Black Women's Association : 25 Cougar Crescent, Suite 1404, Scarborough Ont, M1J 3C5; (416) 267-8433
Arab Canadian Women's Association : Box 228 Stn. B, Ottawa Ont, K1P 6C4; (613) 835-0717
National Inuit Women's Association : 200 Elgin Street, Suite 804, Ottawa Ont, K2P 1L5; (613) 238-3977
Native Women's Resource Center : 345 Gerrard St. East, Toronto Ont, M5A 2G1; (416) 963-9963
Older Women's Network : 427 Bloor St. West, Toronto Ont, M4A 1X7; (416) 924-4188
Voice of Women : 736 Bathurst Street, Suite 215, Toronto Ont, M5S 2R4; (416) 537-9343
Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF) : 489 College Street, Suite 403, Toronto Ont, M6G 1A5; (416) 963-9654

Central/Prairies

Aboriginal Women of Manitoba : 78 Grey Friars, Winnipeg MA, R2B 2J4
African Women's League : 720 Broadway Ave., Winnipeg MA, R3G 0X1; (204) 489-3531
Northern Women's Resource Center : Box 266, Flin Flon MA, R8A 1M9; (204) 687-3346
Women Looking Forward : 223 12th Ave. SW, Suite 305, Calgary AB, T2R 0G9
Indo-Canadian Women's Association : 5316 89th Street, Edmonton AB, T6E 5P9; (403) 468-7170
Canadian Farm Workers Network : RR 4, Red Deer AB, T4N 5E4; (403) 886-4129

Pacific

Aquelaine Latin American Women's Cultural Collective : Box 65534 Stn. F, Vancouver BC, V5N 5K6
Immigrant and Visible Minority Women of BC : 3371-B Kingsway, Vancouver BC, V5R 2R6; (604) 438-5993
Indian Mahila Women's Association : P.O. Box 67553 Stn O, Vancouver BC, V5W 3T9; (604) 321-7225
Native Women's Association of the Northwest Territories : Box 2321 Yellowknife, X1A 2P7; (403) 373-5509
Yukon Indian Women's Association : 22 Nisutlin Drive, Whitehorse Yukon, Y1A 3S5; (403) 667-6162

• HIV-AIDS

Atlantic Canada/Maritimes

Atlantic First Nations AIDS Task Force : P.O. Box 961, Sydney NS, B1P 6J7; (902) 539-4107
AIDS Nova Scotia : 206-5224 Blowers Street, Halifax NS, B3J 1J7; (902) 425-4882
Nova Scotia PWA Coalition : 2093 Gottingen Street, Halifax NS, B3K 2B3; (902) 429-7922
AIDS-PEI : P.O. Box 2762, Charlottetown PEI, C1A 8C4; (902) 566-2437
SIDA-Nouveau Brunswick/AIDS New Brunswick : 65 Brunswick Street, Fredericton NB, E3B 1G5; (506) 459-7518
Newfoundland and Labrador AIDS Committee : 1 Queen Street, 2nd Floor, St. John's Nfld, A1C 4K1; (709) 579-8656

Québec

Centre d'action SIDA Montréal-femmes : 1168 rue Sainte-

Interesting Reading

The New Our Bodies, Ourselves. Updated and expanded for the '90s. By the Boston Women's Health Book Collective. Touchstone. 1992.

Des plantes qui guérissent. By Marie Provost, Bibliothèque québécoise. 1991.

Natural medecine for children. By Julian Scott ph.d.

Indian herbology in North America. By Alma R. Hutchens. Merco. Canada. 1973.

Wise Woman Herbal for the Childbearing years. By Susun Weed. Woodstock, 1985.

The Wise Women Herbal: Healing Wise. By Susun S. Weed.

How Indians use wild plants for food, medecine and crafts. By Frances Densmore. Dover. 1974.

Hygienia a woman herbal. By Jeanne Parvati. Greestone. 1978.

The Invisible Epidemic. The story of Women and AIDS. By Gena Corea. Harper Perennial 1993.

Susie Sexpert's Lesbian Sex World. By Susie Bright. Cleis Press. 1990.

Take Back Your Life. A Wimmin's Guide To Alternative Health Care. By Alicia non Grata. Available at: Profane Existence Collective, P.O. Box 8722, Minneapolis, MIN 55408, USA. Send $2 US.

Making it safe. By Cindy Patton.

Food combining for health. By Doris Grant & Jean Joyce. Thorson Publishers inc.

Herbal Home Health Care. By John Cristopher. Provo. Utah. Biworld publisher. 1976.

La Flore Laurentienne. By Frère Marie-Victorin. Presses de l'UdM. Montréal. 1964.

Peterson Field Guides to Medicinal Plants. Houghton Mifflin Company.

A City Herbal. By Maida Silverman. Knopf. 1977.

Useful Addresses

• Mail order herbs

La Clef des Champs : 2278 Montée rang 2, Val David, J0T 2N0; (819) 322-1561

Blessed Herbs : Rt. 5, Box 1042, Ava MO, 65608 USA

Avena Botanicals : P.O. Box 365, West Rockport ME, 04865 USA

Herb Pharm : Box 116, Williams OR, 97544 USA

• Women's organizations/ referral/health

Atlantic Canada/Maritimes

Canadian Coalition of Women's Groups : Mount St. Vincent University, 166 Bedford Hwy, Room 9 Seton Annex, Halifax NS, B3M 2J6; (902) 443-4450

Nova Scotia Native Women's Association : P.O. Box 805, Truro NS, B2N 5E8; (902) 893-7402

Women's Action Coalition of Nova Scotia : P.O. Box 9436 Stn. A, Halifax NS, B3K 5S3

New Brunswick Aboriginal Peoples : 320 St. Mary Street, Fredericton NB, E3A 2S4

Carleton County Farm Workers : RR 7, Woodstock NB, E0J 2B0; (506) 328-3723

Les femmes de Restigouche : Box 2197, Dalhousie NB, E0K 1B0; (506) 684-5920

Women Working with Immigrant Women : 634 Queen Street, Suite 12, Fredericton NB, E3B 1C2

Innu Resource Center : Sheshetshit, Nitassinan, A0P 1M0

Newfoundland and Labrador Women's Institute : P.O. Box 13785, St. John's Nfld, A1B 4G3; (709) 754-0690

Umbrella Farm Women's Association : Box 135, Lethbridge Nfld, A0C 1V0; (709) 467-2685

Aboriginal Women's Association : P.O. Box 213, Charlottetown PEI, C1A 7K4

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Ten good reasons
to keep this booklet
on hand and to share it



If you'd like to know as much about your cunt as your doctor does

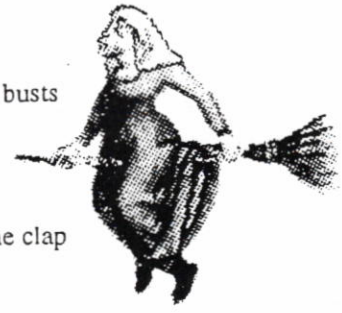
If you break out into a cold sweat every time your period's late



If the pill is giving you the blues

If your friend's got cramps

If the condom busts



If you catch the clap

If antibiotics give you a yeast infection

If your yeasty itch makes you want to grab the steel wool

If you bleed buckets



If STDs are squatting your crotch

...and for many other reasons...

Infusion : 1 ounce of root, 2 cups of boiling water. Steep covered for 45 minutes. Take 1/4 cup, 3 to 4 times a day.

Tincture : 10 to 15 drops in a little water, 3 to 4 times a day.

Wild Carrot Seed

(Queen Anne's lace)

Daucus carota • carotte sauvage

part used : seeds, roots

Root tea is a diuretic which helps eliminate urinary stones and worms.

The seeds can be used as a "morning after pill," to prevent the implantation of a fertilized egg (see p.17).

Wild carrot seed is easily found in the city and country; the seeds should be picked in the middle to end of September (consult someone who has done this before).

Warning : be very careful about identifying this plant. It is easily confused with poison hemlock, which can cause death (no joke).

Yarrow

Achillea millefolium • achillée mille-feuille

part used : flowers and leaves

Yarrow is a cleanser. It is used for colds and flu, hemorrhages of the lungs and the intestines, vaginal and bladder infections, menstrual disorders, hemorrhoids, fatigue, and circulation problems.

Infusion : Make a regular infusion (p.35). Drink 3 to 4 cups daily

Decoction : Start with a regular infusion that's been prepared and strained. Simmer until the liquid is reduced to half its original volume. Strain. Drink cold—half a cup, 3 times daily.

For flu and colds : Drink one to two cups of the hot infusion. For colds, wrap yourself in blankets after drinking in order to sweat, then take a bath.

For abdominal pain or heavy bleading : Take a hot infusion before menstruation or as needed for cramps.





Tansy (Bitter Buttons)

Tanacetum vulgare • tanaisie vulgaire

part used : leaves, flowers and seeds

Tansy is used for amenorrhea and dysmenorrhea. The seeds can be used to expel worms. It is an emmenagogue which can be used to promote regular periods. Warning: Tansy can cause heavy bleeding in women who usually have a heavy menstrual flow. Do not confuse with tansy ragwort..

Take in small and repeated doses. Extra-large doses can cause congestion and result in discomfort to the abdominal organs.

Infusion : Prepare a regular infusion (p.35) using 1 ounce herb to 1 pint (500 ml) water. Take 1 cup, 3 times a day before meals.

Tincture : 10 to 15 drops in warm water, 3 to 4 times a day.

Thyme

Thymus vulgaris or Thymus pulegioides • thym

part used : leaves

Thyme is used for headaches, fever, colds, bronchitis, cramps, digestive problems, nightmares, whooping cough, wounds, toothaches, scabies, ulcer, sore throats, worms, rheumatism, and as a deodorant and a mouth-wash.

Infusion : 1 teaspoon of thyme in one cup of water. Take 1 cup, 3 to 4 times a day.

For cough : Mix with honey ; take 1 to 2 teaspoons as needed.

For fever : Drink a hot infusion. Wrap yourself in blankets so as to sweat ; then take a shower.

For worms : 1 to 5 drops of thyme essential oil with honey and some olive oil, 3 times daily.

For skin problems, scabies, parasites : Mix 2 to 3 teaspoons thyme essential oil in 5 ounces olive oil. Apply 3 or more times every day to the affected areas. Also take thyme infusions 3 times a day.

Valerian

Valeriana officinalis • valériane

part used : root

Valerian is used in cases of anxiety, depression, digestive or circulation disorders. It is good for treating problems related to worry, spasms, trembling, convulsions, epilepsy, neuralgia. It is also used to facilitate sleeping, for headaches and for pain in general. **Prepare valerian as an infusion only, never as a decoction** (see p.35). Do not pre-soak the roots or steep for longer than 2 hours. Because of its bitter taste and foul smell, it is suggested to add one of the following herbs (which also have medicinal properties) to valerian infusions : cinnamon (for convulsions) ; cayenne (for cramps) ; anise (for digestive disorders) ; ginger (for menstrual irregularities).

Body Mapping (in brief)



The external female genital organs are the clitoris and the labia. Together they form the vulva. The labia majora (outer lips) cover the other parts of the vulva. They become thinner at their base, where they fuse with the perineum, the muscle between the anus and the vagina. Inside the labia majora are the labia minora. They are joined at the top to form a protective sheath over the clitoris. They also protect the opening to the urethra.

The area between the labia minora is largely occupied by a space called the vestibule. At birth this space is almost completely covered by the hymen, which varies in size, shape, and rigidity. The hymen can be torn during sporting activities, by the insertion of a tampon, or during masturbation or vaginal penetration. Some women have pieces of skin around the vestibule—these are the remnants of the hymen.

The Clitoris & Genital Glands

The clitoris is an organ designed essentially for sexual stimulation and pleasure. The clitoris and labia contain erectable tissue which swell up during sexual excitement.

Two pairs of glands are attached to the vulva : the Skene's glands lie just under the clitoris, and secrete an alkaline liquid which reduces the vagina's natural acidity. The second and larger set of glands, the Bartholin's glands, are located at the opening of the vestibule, and secrete fluid during stimulation. They are normally about the size of a small pea and are not very prominent. Their swelling can be caused by what is called a Bartholin's abscess or cyst.

The Vagina

The vagina is the channel which connects the vulva and the internal organs. It is seven to twelve centimetres long. During a woman's fertile time, her vaginal secretions are acidic, but before puberty and after menopause the vagina is moderately alkaline. Vaginal secretions come from the Bartholin glands and from the cervical canal (which is also the source of cervical mucus). Their normal discharge is odorless and watery or slightly white. They cleanse the vaginal canal, in addition to coating the interior of the vagina.

The Uterus

The uterus is about the size and shape of a pear and is made up of two main parts : the body and the cervix. From puberty to menopause, the endometrium (or the uterine lining) forms every month, to provide nutritive support for a fertilized egg. If the egg is not fertilized, the endometrium is expelled—this is known as menstruation.

The cervix is shaped like a cylinder; it is approximately two and a half centimetres long, with a fine canal running through it, opening into the uterus up top, and to the vagina at the bottom.

All changes in the functions of the uterus (menstruation, pregnancy, menopause) are regulated by hormones controlled by the hypothalamus, the pituitary gland, the ovaries, and by other substances such as prostaglandins secreted by the uterine tissue. The uterus is connected to the fallopian tubes, which harbor the ovum (or egg) released every month by one of the two ovaries.

The Ovaries

The ovaries are located in the pelvis and rest on either side of the uterus. Each ovary is held in place by strong elastic ligaments. The serrated orifice of the fallopian tube is located just above each ovary, with the tube leading to the uterus. Even though they are very close to each other, the ovaries and the opening of the fallopian tube are not in direct contact. The ovaries develop and release the ovum and play an essential role in our hormonal system. They are pinkish-grey, almond shaped and are about three centimetres long. A layer of cells called the oogenic epithelium covers the ovaries; it is from these cells that the egg is formed. Thousands of immature ova (eggs) gather in these pouches on the surface of the ovaries. In addition to their role of developing the ova, the ovaries produce the hormones estrogen and progesterone.

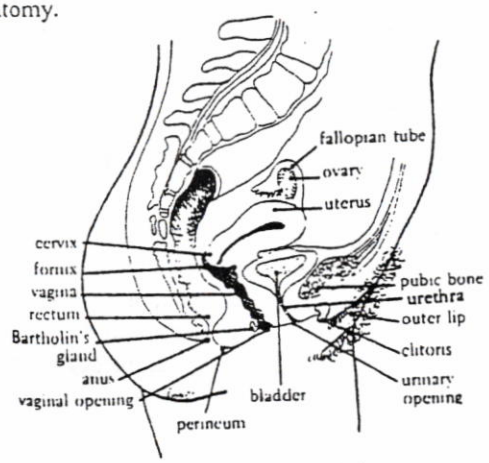
For more information on anatomy, women's genital organs and their functions, and on the role and fabrication of hormones, consult the following books:

Natural Reading in Gynecology by Rina Nissim (1984, Édition Dispensaire des femmes).

Hormones : The Women's Answer Book by Lois Jovanovic M.D. and Genell J. Subak-Sharpe M.S. (1987, Ivy Books, published by Ballantine Books).

Natural Hormone Health : Drug-Free Ways to Balance Your Life by Arabelle Melville (Harper Collins Publishers).

The New Our Bodies, Ourselves (Updated and Expanded for the 90s) by the Boston Women's Health Book Collective (1992, Simon and Schuster)—especially good for info on anatomy.



FEMALE PELVIC ORGANS (side view)

Red Raspberry Leaves

Rubus idaeus • feuilles de framboisier

part used : leaves

Red raspberry leaves are used for diarrhea, hemorrhoids, vaginitis, hormonal problems and during and after pregnancy. They are by far one of the best uterine tonics. They stimulate menstrual flow by toning the ovaries and the uterus and improving their functions. Taken during menstruation, red raspberry leaves relieve cramps and regulate the flow. They also help with digestion and nausea.

Infusion : Make a regular infusion (p.35). Take 1 cup, 3 times daily.

Douche : Once a day with a concentrated infusion at room temperature. Do not use for more than one week at a time.

Rosehips

Rosa canina • églantier

part used : fruit

A tonic for fatigue and vitamin deficiencies and a diuretic, rosehips contain a lot of vitamin C. They are excellent for the skin, and help balance hormonal irregularities—good for irregular menstrual cycles and heavy white vaginal discharge (leucorrhea).

Make a regular infusion (p.35); take the recommended dosage (p.36). Rosehips in infusion are excellent cold with lemon.

Rosemary

Rosmarinus officinalis • romarin

part used : leaves

Often used for headaches, colic pains, colds, nervousness, depression, palpitations and uterine congestion. A pulmonary cleanser, it is also helpful for asthma when the steam is inhaled : add a strong infusion to your bath.

Make a regular infusion (p.35) ; drink 1/4 cup, 3 to 4 times a day.

Sage

Salvia officinalis • sauge

part used : leaves

Used for sore throats, to bring down high fevers and to stimulate circulation and digestion. Sage impairs lactation (dries up mother's milk). This herb imitates estrogen and can help with certain menstrual irregularities.

Infusion : Make a regular infusion (p.35). Take 1 to 3 times a day.

To dry up mother's milk : 1 cup of cold infusion twice a day.

To gargle with : Make an infusion using 1/2 cup of water and 1/2 cup of apple cider vinegar.

Laxative : 1 teaspoon of powder mixed with honey. Chewing on the dried root (in stick form) helps regulate digestive problems.

Motherwort

Leonorus cardiaca • agripaume

part used : leaves

A really good uterine and heart tonic, motherwort also relieves cramps. It can be used in strong doses and for long periods of time. Do not use during pregnancy.

Infusion : Make a regular infusion (p.35). Drink 1/4 cup 3 to 4 times a day.

Late menstruation : Drink warm. When the flow is normal, drink cold as a tonic.

Vaginitis : Douche with the infusion at body temperature, 1 douche per day for a week (or less).

Mugwort

Artemisia vulgaris • armoise

part used : whole plant

Emmenagogue, anti-epileptic, anti-spasmodic. Do not take in case of uterine inflammation or during pregnancy.

Make a regular infusion (p.35). Take 1/4 cup 3 to 4 times daily.

Parsley

Petroselinum sativum • persil

part used : whole plant

Parsley is rich in minerals and contains more iron than any other green vegetable. It is rich in vitamins A and B and has three times more vitamin C than citrus fruits. Parsley is excellent for kidneys and bladder stones, good for the optical and cervical nerves, the suprarenal glands and blood vessels. It prevents rheumatism, and helps inflamed glands and menstrual problems. The roots and seeds are used in decoction. If you have a hard time eating enough fresh parsley, take it in infusion instead. In case of kidney infection, take ginger (which is an anti-inflammatory) instead.

Infusion : Make a normal infusion (p.35). Take 2 to 6 tablespoons 4 times a day.

Pennyroyal

Mentha pulegium • pouliot

part used : whole plant

Pennyroyal (often referred to as American pennyroyal) is an expectorant which facilitates evacuation of bile and is used for bronchitis and whooping cough. It also induces uterine contractions. Do not use during pregnancy. Pennyroyal in herb form can be hard to find in many parts of Canada.

Essential oil : Rub the skin, it keeps mosquitoes away and can get late menstruation to start. WARNING : Pennyroyal essential oil is toxic—can cause death. FOR EXTERNAL USE ONLY.

About Menstruation



It is surprising to realize to what extent menstruation is an individual thing—every woman menstruates, yet color, odor, temperature, needs, desires and pain can vary tremendously from woman to woman. It is also amazing to note that women who live together or who are very close often menstruate at the same time.

In many societies menstruation was traditionally (and in some cases still is) viewed as a very powerful time—a time for women to purify themselves and to relax. This is a far cry from how most of us experience bleeding. We're usually taught to hide any evidence of blood, pads or plugs (hence the ridiculous individually wrapped polka-dotted packaging), to be "discreet" (like, don't talk about it at all) or don't whine ("you're such a bitch when you're on the rag"). We encourage bitching, talking and doing whatever else makes you feel better.



A Good Idea for Replacing Tampons



Using brand-name tampons and pads can be harmful to you. Plus they cost a fortune, being "luxury" items and all. Whenever possible, avoid scented products as these release a whole slew of chemicals into your girl parts (and smell gross). Tampons are bleached using dangerous chemicals which can be absorbed into the body through the vaginal walls and Toxic Shock Syndrome has been directly linked to tampon use. Plastic tampon applicators are non-biodegradable and clog sewage systems, often washing up on bays and beaches. You can avoid some of these problems by using non-bleached tampons, available at some health food stores. You can also buy 100% cotton pads (or even better--make your own!) they are washable and re-usable, thus avoiding unnecessary waste.

Instead of tampons you can use natural sea sponges. Simply dampen the sponge, insert it into the vagina with your fingers, and remove it once it's saturated. Don't worry about pushing it up too far-- even though it doesn't have a cord there's no risk losing it "up there." Sponges can be left inside the vagina for several hours, depending on your flow and the size of the sponge. Once the sponge is saturated, rinse it in warm or cold running water, squeeze out the excess water, and reinsert it.

This is a cheaper, eco-friendly alternative to tampons. Avoid synthetic sponges. Natural sponges are often

sold as make-up removal pads, and can be found in the cosmetics section of the pharmacy or at health food stores. Of course they aren't advertised as menstrual sponges cause that would threaten the "sanitary hygiene" industry. A sponge can last up to six months if you take good care of it. Discard the sponge once it begins to fall apart.

Soak your sponge overnight in a cup of water with one teaspoon of white vinegar before and/or after each period. This kills the bacteria that can cause yeast and other vaginitis. If you have a bad vaginal infection during menstruation, it's best not to reuse that sponge again. Store your sponge in a cloth or box between periods.

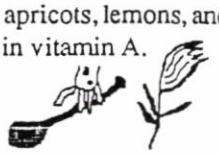
Pre-Menstrual Syndrome (PMS)



These are varied : mood changes, irritability, cramps, painful or swollen breasts, headaches, zits, water retention, bloating, lack of energy, herpes outbreaks, gas and other digestive malfunctions, flu-like symptoms, back pains, ... combine these symptoms with an irregular or painful cycle and you've got the generic profile of a woman who's ready to kill. Most likely she'll be prescribed the Pill to "solve" all her problems. Medical genius at it's finest... Methods of coping :

Diet

- Lower your intake of salt.
- Eat foods rich in potassium : bananas, potatoes, cabbage, pears and almonds.
- Eat a lot of seaweed : kelp (fresh or in tablet form), hijiki, dulse...
- Make foods high in vitamin B6 a regular part of your diet : green vegetables, soy products, and nutritional yeast (you can also take brewer's yeast capsules) ; note that women who are prone to yeast infections should avoid yeast at all times.
- Take a lot of vitamin A, especially if you have painful breasts and suffer from cramping. Carrots, onions, garlic, turnips, spinach, lentils, apricots, lemons, and raw vegetable oils are all rich in vitamin A.
- Drink lots of water.



Herbal treatments

- Follow the treatments for hormonal imbalances (p.32). or
- Take valerian tincture (p.48) to relax.
- Take ginger (p.44) to relieve tension and cramps.

Some books provide a detailed account of the role played by hormones in causing PMS—why we produce too much of certain hormones, and not enough of others. PMS is often caused by hormonal irregularities,

Golden Seal Root

Hydrastis canadensis • hydraste canadien

part used : root and rhizome

Similar to echinacea and myrrh, golden seal root is a powerful natural antibiotic. It is used for viral and bacterial infections. Golden seal is a remedy for severe inflammations in the nose, throat, stomach, colon, and is also good for hemorrhoids. Especially effective for Herpes-type viruses (cold sores, shingles), it is also excellent as a douche for vaginal infections, as an eyewash for conjunctivitis, antiseptic mouthwash, and for skin problems and burns.

Infusion : 1/4 teaspoon of the powdered root in 1 cup of boiling water. Mix well. Take 2 to 5 tablespoons 4 times daily. NB : this tastes very bitter.

Capsules : Measure 1/4 teaspoon of powder. Fill 3 capsules with this amount. Take 3 capsules daily.

Tincture : 15 drops in warm water, 3 times a day.

Paste : Mix a small amount of powder with water to make a light paste. Use externally on skin infections and cover with a cloth (it stains).

Douche : Use a strong infusion during a treatment. It is good to use golden seal both internally and externally. WARNING : golden seal is toxic when used excessively ; do not use for longer than two weeks. Do not use during pregnancy.

Lavender

Lavendula officinalis • lavande

part used : flowers

Lavender is a sedative and an anti-bacterial. Use the essential oil externally on open sores and to soothe insect bites. Wash it off after about 15 to 20 minutes, as it can burn. For a relaxing bath, prepare an infusion of lavender and add it to the water, or add a few drops of lavender essential oil.

Licorice

Glycyrrhiza glabra • réglisse

part used : the root whole, broken up into pieces or in powder form

Licorice is an emollient, an expectorant and a gentle laxative. It also contains substances similar to estrogen (as does sage). In Chinese medicine its nickname is "the reconcilor" since in addition to being used on its own, it can be combined with all the other herbs. Its presence increases their medicinal properties while masking the bitter taste of certain herbs.

Decoction : 1 ounce or more of licorice root. Simmer for 20 minutes in 2 cups of water. Take 1/4 cup 3 to 4 times a day. This quantity can be added to other decoctions or infusions.

Garlic

Allium sativum • ail

part used : bulb

Garlic is a natural antiseptic. Its medicinal properties are found in raw garlic (for best results, try to buy organic garlic) : it is a blood purifier ; it regulates circulation, low and high blood pressure; it is good for yeast infections, chlamydia, other infections and nervous disorders. Garlic is a diuretic, helps balance glandular disorders, and strengthens the immune system. Also good for warts, ear-aches, and corns.

Raw garlic : Chop or press garlic clove. Take with cold water or mix with honey. Don't wait more than 5 minutes after you cut the garlic clove to consume it. Eat one or more cloves of fresh garlic 3 to 4 times a day.

Douche : Boil water for 15 minutes. When cooled down to body temperature, add the juice of one or two garlic cloves.

Ear-ache (ear infection) : Peel one garlic clove without breaking it. Wrap it with cheesecloth or gauze. Dip in olive oil and put in the opening of the ear (don't push it too far in) before going to bed, and if possible during the day, for 4 days or more. Also eat fresh garlic.

Warts : Rub with a garlic clove cut in half, as often as possible.

Ginger

Zingiber officinale • gingembre

part used : rhizome and root

Ginger is a stimulant, an analgesic and an aphrodisiac. It is used for boils, bronchitis, colic pain, diarrhea, flu, sore throats, hemorrhage of the lungs, painful menstruation, nausea, neuralgia, and rheumatism. Ginger is particularly effective for abdominal problems. It can be taken in capsules with a hot beverage or added to your bath for fever and skin irritations. It can also help bring on a late period. It can be used in powder form, but the fresh root is much more potent.

Infusion : Fresh ginger : Grate a good quantity of the root and infuse in boiled water for 30 to 60 minutes. Powdered ginger : 1 teaspoon per cup of hot water with honey and lemon. Drink 1 cup 3 times a day with honey. For colds, add 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper to each cup.

Capsules : Fill the capsules with ginger powder, take 3 capsules daily.

Fresh root : Simply chew a good quantity of the root several times a day with water, or grate it and mix with honey.

and so it is helpful to read up on this subject (see reference to *Natural Reading in Gynecology* p.50).

Amenorrhea or Absence of Menses

This may be due to several factors. Normal absence of menstruation (missing a period, or several) is caused by pregnancy, lactation, and menopause.

Amenorrhea can also be caused by very poor diet, excessive exercising, losing large amounts of weight, fatigue, stress, hormonal imbalance, going off the pill, or by metabolic problems : diabetes, liver disease, inconsistencies in thyroid levels.



Try to eat well.

To bring on menstruation

- A sprig of parsley inserted as far as possible into the vagina can bring on menstruation by causing uterine contractions. Insert it before going to sleep, and remove it the following morning. Do this for 3 to 4 days. Accompany this with parsley infusions (p.46).

or

- Take sage in infusion or tincture (p.47).

or

- Drink motherwort infusions (p.46) for 4 to 5 days. Do not exceed 6 days ; you should get your period in the following days.
- Massage the reflex zones for the uterus and ovaries 2 to 3 times a day (p.11).
- Tansy in infusion or tincture (p.48) can help regulate amenorrhea. Note that tansy can cause heavy bleeding in women who normally have a heavy flow.
- If you suffer regularly from amenorrhea or late periods, it would be better for you to think in terms of a more holistic treatment instead of simply trying to bring on your period. Consult an herbalist, or try homeopathic remedies or other alternative medicines. Drinking sage and red raspberry leaf teas on a regular basis can help improve this condition, as they help tone the uterus and ovaries.



Menorrhagia or Excessive Flow



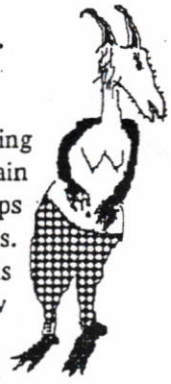
Red raspberry leaves (p.47) are best as they do not stop you from bleeding, but help regulate your flow. Start using them one week before your period is due and continue throughout menstruation. Repeat if necessary.

The following all help reduce excessive menstrual flow:

- Vitamin C.
- Vitamin T (sesame seeds, sesame butter).
- Bioflavonoids (buckwheat, the skin of citrus fruits, grapes, cherries, blackberries).

• Alfalfa (2 handfuls of fresh sprouts or 3 tablets per day throughout your cycle) will lessen your menstrual flow.

Dysmenorrhea or Painful Periods



Most of us experience sensations ranging from mild discomfort to excruciating pain during menstruation. We get cramps before, during, and after our periods. Medical science tells us that to suffer is part of being a woman. But we know they're liars.

Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are sometimes responsible for pain but most of the time cramps are caused by inflammation, swelling and tension in the cervix and uterus.

What to do

- Avoid salt, sugar and processed foods (including white sugar, white flour and white bread).
- Eat foods high in potassium every day : bananas, dry fruits, melons, oranges, carrots, leafy green vegetables and potatoes.
- Eat dark green vegetables and oranges for vitamin A (it reduces tension).
- Eat oatmeal, broccoli, parsley (which can be taken as an infusion), Brazil nuts, almonds, and seaweed for their high calcium content (which eliminates cramps). Seaweed (kelp in particular) can be taken in tablet form.



- Hot baths, a hot water bottle placed on the lower abdomen, smoking a joint, vigorous or light exercise, and orgasms all help relieve tension, cramping and pain.
- Yarrow (p.49) taken in capsule form, tinctures or infusions provides very good results. Begin 1 week before your period and continue throughout its duration.

or

- Ginger (p.44) infusions rapidly relieve cramps. You can also chew the fresh root. Take as needed to relieve pain.

or

- Red raspberry leaf tea (p.47) works well to alleviate cramps but must be taken regularly (over a period of months). It is mild and can be used for long-term treatment.



internally. Fresh chickweed can dissolve warts ; in tincture form it is effective in dissolving cysts, especially ovarian cysts. The leaves can be made into a poultice (p.38) or wash (p.38) to treat external infections and irritations, including pink-eye.

Infusion : Make a regular infusion (p.35). Drink 1/2 cup, 3 to 4 times a day.

For constipation : Take 1 cup of the infusion every 3 hours.

Tincture : 15 to 20 drops in a glass of warm water, 2 to 3 times a day. (This can be used as a long-term treatment for cysts.)

Fresh plant : The more you eat, the better!

Cinnamon

Cinnamomum zeylanicum • cannelle

part used : bark

Cinnamon is useful in case of muscular pains, flu, and digestive spasms. It is also an aphrodisiac.

Decoction : Make a normal decoction (p.36) ; take 1/4 cup 3 to 4 times daily.

Cloves

Eugenia caryophyllata • clou de girofle

part used : dried flowers and buds

Cloves facilitate circulation, raise body temperature, stimulate and disinfect the stomach, skin, kidneys, intestines, lungs and bronchii. Clove oil is an analgesic that stops toothaches when applied directly to the tooth or cavity.

Infusion : 1 teaspoon cloves in 2 cups water. Take 1/8 of a cup, 3 times daily.

Echinacea (Purple Coneflower)

Echinacea pupurea or augustofolia • rudbeckie

part used : the root

A blood purifier, it stimulates the production of white blood cells which destroy bacteria or viruses. Echinacea is an herbal substitute for antibiotics as it strengthens the immune system. It is used for blood poisoning, poisonous stings and bites, chronic or acute bacterial infections, vaginal infections and hemorroids. A good prostate tonic, it also facilitates the elimination of fat. Echinacea is non-toxic and can be taken over long periods of time.

Decoction : Make a regular decoction (p.36). Add licorice root if the taste makes you feel nauseous. Take 1 to 5 tablespoons, 3 to 6 times a day.

Tincture : 15 to 30 drops in a little warm water every 1 to 6 hours, depending on the gravity of the infection.

Douche : Use a decoction at room temperature, 2 to 3 times a week for 2 weeks. Never abuse vaginal douche.

Cayenne Pepper

Capiscum frutescens • poivre de cayenne

part used : fruit

Cayenne pepper (also known as cayenne powder, as it most often comes in powdered form) is a stimulant, a tonic, an astringent, a blood-cleanser and an antiseptic. It induces sweating and is excellent for blood circulation, to stimulate the heart, clean and restore elasticity to the veins and arteries, regulate blood pressure and relieve congestion in the mucus membranes. Cayenne soothes and heals sores in the stomach and intestinal tissues. It stops both internal and external bleeding and accelerates coagulation. Cayenne is effective in cases of anorexia and liver congestion. It can help you stay awake for long periods of time as it gives energy. It also strengthens the immune system and is excellent for colds and asthma.

Make sure to buy medicinal cayenne pepper ; the kind that is used for cooking has been roasted, making it lose its therapeutic properties. Consult your local herb store.

For colds : 1/4 to 1 teaspoon in hot water, 3 times daily (very hot!).

Capsules : 1/4 to 1 teaspoon in a capsule taken with a hot beverage, 3 times per day.

Celery Seed

Apium graveolens • graines de céleri

part used : seed

Celery seed is a diuretic. It will lower high blood pressure, relieve headaches and nervousness.

Infusion : Grind lightly and put 3 teaspoons in 3 cups of cold water. Cover and simmer for 20 min. Strain. Drink hot, 3 cups daily.

Chamomile

Matricaria chamomilla or Matricaria recutita • camomille

part used : flowers

Chamomile is a sedative for the nerves and a tonic for the intestines. It is used for ear-aches, tooth-aches, for slow or difficult digestion, insomnia and the flu.

Infusion : 1/2 ounce of flowers, in 3 cups of water. Take 1/2 to 1 cup, 3 to 4 times a day.

For colds : 1/4 teaspoon of cayenne powder in 1 cup of chamomile infusion ; add honey. Drink hot, 4 to 5 times a day.

Chickweed

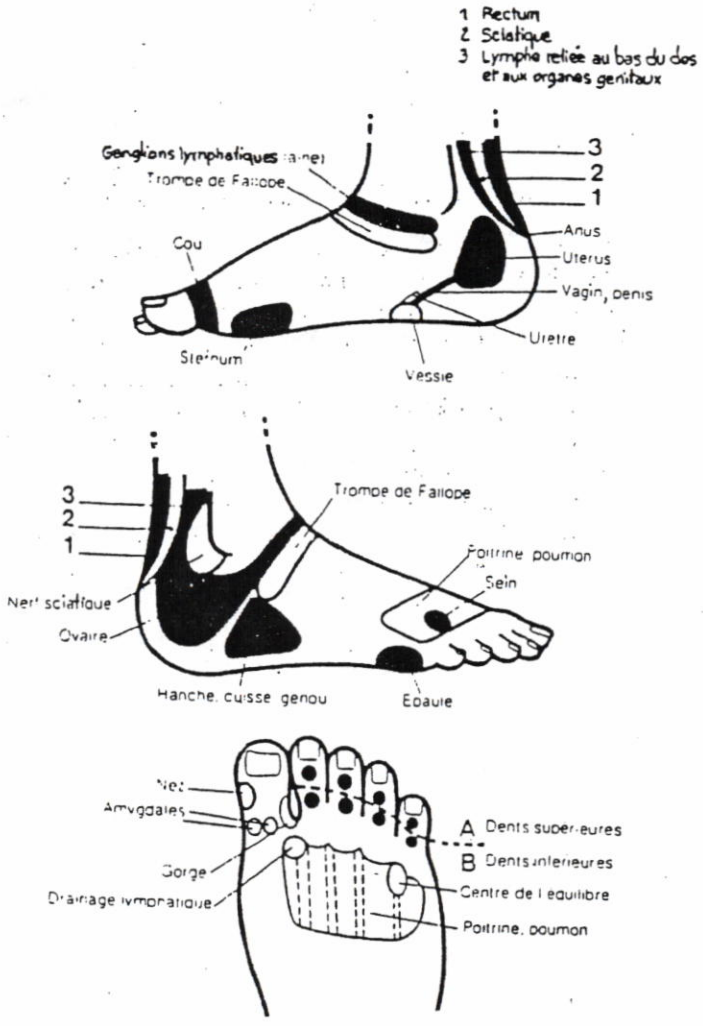
Stellaria media • céraiste vulgaire

part used : whole plant

Chickweed is found in abundance all over the countryside and city. It is an expectorant, a laxative, relieves gas and colic, helps soothe and protect mucuous membranes, and promotes healing both externally and

Foot Massage to Alleviate Cramps

Massage the uterine and ovarian reflex areas (located behind the ankles, just above the heel). Press hard where it hurts. This area is generally very sensitive at the onset of menstruation. Use your thumb to put firm pressure on the area, for five minutes on each side. Alternate massaging each foot, as needed. This massage yields astonishing results, especially if it's done by someone else.



References

For more information about the dangers of using bleached tampons and pads (as well as excellent references for alternatives), consult *Whitewash* by Liz Armstrong and Adrienne Scott. 1992. Harper Collins.

The Doctor's Case Against the Pill. By Barbara Seaman. 1980. Doubleday.

Love in the Age of AIDS

AIDS has been around for more than 15 years. What has it done to the way that women love? This article gives an overview of the situation and what is currently known about prevention. It also provides practical info on how to make love in the time of AIDS.

When it first broke out, AIDS was thought to be a disease of only gay men and intravenous drug users. For close to 10 years, the idea that women could be HIV postive without developing AIDS obscured women and children from research statistics and testing. Upon emerging from this maze, we are confronted with the fact that in North America, women are the largest growing group of people who are HIV positive.

Government statistics reveal that women have a higher rate of infection and a lower rate of survival than men. This may be because women who are HIV positive are not diagnosed or are diagnosed too late to receive treatment that could slow the development of infections. An other aspect is that reseach and treatment were oriented and developed around and for men for the first years of epidemic. We remain unfamiliar with many of women's symptoms because of this. Women still have minimal access to experimental treatment. In Canada and the USA, poor women and women of colour find themselves even more marginalized.



As well, because of lack of social support and difficulties with male partners, few women are able to really practice safe sex.

The Canadian Centre for AIDS in Ottawa has published figures which demonstrate the urgency of this siutation:

- 62 % of women living wtih HIV became infected as a result of non-safe sex with HIV positive men.
- 11,4 % of HIV positive people in Quebec are women.
- Women make up 27 % of all new HIV positive cases per year.
- 65 % of all children infected in the womb live in Quebec.

Who is at risk?

Neither sexual orientation, race or gender, increase a person's risk of infection. AIDS is above all behavorial disease. To be infected, the blood stream must come in contact with the virus. Contact can happen through the exchange of blood (including menstrual blood), sperm, seminal fluid (pre-sperm),

Herbal Properties & Dosages

The English and French common names (eg, bearberry in English ; busserole in French) of the plants are provided, as are their Latin names (eg, *Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*). When buying herbs, always take note of the Latin name of the plant you need ; this will ensure that you get exactly what you're looking for. It's also helpful for buying herbs in non-English or French speaking regions or countries.

You should know that consuming caffeine, nicotine, alcohol and sugar interferes with the absorption of plant material, vitamins and minerals, making the treatments less effective. Try to limit your intake of these substances when using herbal remedies.

If you buy herbs, make sure you buy good quality, well-preserved dried herbs. Dried herbs remain potent for about 12 months. Store them in brown paper bags or glass jars, in a cool, dark place. Commercially sold herbs should be colorful and aromatic. Buy herbs that have not been sprayed with pesticides or other chemicals. Consult the resources section for a list of reliable herb stores and mail-order distributors.

NB : When we talk about using the whole plant, we mean the stems, leaves and flowers ; this does not include the plant's root.

Bearberry (Uva-Ursi)

Arctostaphylos uva-ursi • busserole

part used : leaves

Bearberry acts specifically on the genital-urinary system. We use it to treat the prostate, cystitis, the kidneys, bladder inflammation, uterine and vaginal infections.

Infusion : Make a regular infusion (p.35) ; take 1/2 cup, 3 to 4 times daily.

Douche : Use an infusion at body temperature, once a day.

Blue Cohosh Root

Caulophyllum thalictroides • actée bleue

part used : root

Blue cohosh is used to treat amenorrhea, dysmenorrhea, vaginal inflammation, slow or halted contractions (during childbirth), nervousness, exhaustion and spasmodic cough (asthma, bronchitis, whooping cough). Do not use during pregnancy.

Make a regular decoction (p.36). Take 1 teaspoon to 1 tablespoon, 3 to 4 times a day.

For amenorrhea and dysmenorrhea : 1/4 cup of the hot decoction, 3 times a day.

Spasms : Take stronger doses or ingest more often.

Picking your Own Herbs



Several of the plants mentioned in this booklet are easily found growing in the countryside; many of them are also commonly found in gardens and empty lots in the city. Chamomile, chickweed, red raspberry leaves, tansy, wild carrot seed and yarrow are among the most abundant and easiest to spot.

Picking your own herbs gives you the advantage of getting the freshest herbs possible, allowing you to prepare your own tinctures and dried herbs, and it can also save you money.

However, if you do want to pick your own herbs, there are a few things you should know:

- Some plants are poisonous and even deadly if ingested (for example, wild carrot seed is easily confused with poison hemlock, which can be fatal). You should be 100% sure that the plant you are picking is the one you really want! Unless you've done this before, it's best to go on a "field trip" with someone who knows their stuff, in addition to consulting a field-guide book to help you recognize and identify plants. Get to know some of the different plants well; take note of how they look and smell before you embark on picking anything. If you're ever unsure, even slightly, don't take chances. Always take a field-guide book with you.
- Be respectful. Never pick more than 1/3 of the plants available... this ensures that they'll come back the following year.
- It's far better to pick plants in the country rather than the city. If you must pick 'em in the city, get them from parks or empty lots located far from roads—otherwise you may be wasting your time—plants located near roadways are high in lead and other contaminants.
- Read up on the subject. Know when to pick the plants and plant parts you need. For example, roots are best harvested in the fall, flowers right after they bloom, etc.

For further reading

The Wise Women Herbal : Healing Wise. By Susun S. Weed.

Peterson Field Guides to Medicinal Plants (Houghton Mifflin Company) are excellent for identifying plants. The one we use here in Ontario and Québec is the *Eastern/ Central guide*. Other guides to North America and even Central and South America are also available.

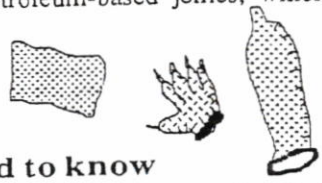
A City Herbal. By Maida Silverman. 1977. Knopf.

vaginal secretions, breast milk or any other bodily fluid secretion contaminated by blood. Example : saliva mixed blood. No woman is automatically protected from HIV since it is impossible to know about the past or present of our partners. Safe sex is the only way to avoid endangering our lives, the lives of our children and the lives of our partners.

What is safe sex?

Safe sex is more than a list of things to do and not to do. It's also a way to explore our sexuality. And for women, it's a protection against STDs, pregnancy and hepatitis. Safe sex also protects HIV positive people from possible re-infection, which could accelerate their sickness.

For now, the best protection against AIDS is latex products : condoms, dental dams, latex gloves. Dental dams are squares of plastic used during oral sex to protect the vagina or the anus. They can be replaced by a condom cut length wise or thick saran wrap. Always use water-based lubrifiants with latex products (no vaseline or other petroleum-based jellies, which disintegrate latex).



What you need to know

- Blood (including menstrual blood), sperm and seminal fluid have the highest concentrations of the virus.
- Vagnial secretions have lower concentrations but can also transmit the disease.
- Vaginal infections such as fungus, yeast, chlamydia can also increase the risk of transmission.
- Bleeding gums, sores, cuts, scraches in the mouth or on the genital organs are other ways of transmission.
- Condyloma or herpes are also means of transmission.
- Some cases have been attributed to the ingestion of vaginal secretions, sperm and breast milk.
- Tears and saliva have little or no traces of the virus, unless they contain blood.
- It is recommended to avoid brushing your teeth before and after a sexual encounter as it can cause bleeding.
- Never share unsterilized needles or syringes (tatoos, percing). There are needle exchanges at prevention centres and affective ways of cleaning needles or syringes (see "Useful Addresses" p.50).
- Sex toys (dildoes, vibrators...) must be disinfected or covered with latex before they can be shared.
- Wear latex gloves for all vaginal or anal penetration with your hands if you have the slightest cut or sore.

In brief...

Keep in mind that monogamy is not the same thing as safe sex. If you think you are at risk or if you want to have a child, it's a good idea to get tested. Always request an **anonymous** test. This is important to keep results, and your name, from appearing in your medical file or else where.

If you are sexually active with men who don't want to wear condoms, ask them whose interests they have in mind and remind yourself that nô fuck is worth risking your life. Tell yourself as well that we women are 18 % more likely to be infected with HIV by men than the other way around.

The section on "Usefull addresses" (p.50) provides several addresses for resource, help and information.

Documents used for this paper :

Les femmes et le sida: un défi pour le Canada au cours des années 90. Produit par Santé et Bien-être social Canada, 1993.

The New Our Bodies, Ourselves. Updated and Expanded for the '90s.

Take Back Your Life. A Wimmin's Guide to Alternative Health Care. By Alicia non Grata. Profane Existence Collective. P.O. 8722, Minneapolis, MIN 55408, USA (Send $2 US).

For further reading:

Susie Sexpert's Lesbian Sex World. By Susie Bright. Cleiss Press. 1990.

The Invisible Epidemic. The Story of Woman and Aids. By Gena Cora. Harper Perennial. 1993.

Making it Safe. By Cindy Patton.



Notes

Certain infusions and decoctions do not taste very good ; add honey or lemon. Most preparations should be taken warm unless specified otherwise. For long-term treatments, remember that tinctures are easier to use.

Most of the plants mentioned in this booklet grow in North America and are therefore available both in the city and in the country, as well as in many herb/health food stores. Keep in mind that herbs are not drugs but foods. They provide nourishment for the body to heal itself. Although some herbs are not to be taken during pregnancy, there are generally no side effects. It is a normal reaction, however, to have less of an appetite and/or light diarrhea during a treatment. You may have to urinate often. Always drink lots of water during a treatment.

You should also note that fresh herbs and tinctures are more potent than dried herbs, even well-preserved ones.

Don't hesitate to seek help from experts in your area and remember certain chronic problems or acute conditions will need more elaborate treatment.



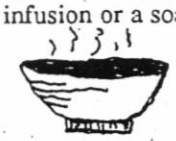
ESSENTIAL OILS

Essential oils or aromatic essences are substances extracted from certain plants by distillation or incision. The essences are dissolved in oil. They are sold in health food and herb stores.

POULTICE



A poultice is essentially crushed plant material, applied externally to the infected area (eg. sores, cuts, burns...). For fresh plants, chop or grate the plant material and apply it directly to the affected area. Dried plants : pour boiling water over the plant, cover and soak for half an hour to 4 hours (see infusions). Strain, then squeeze the water out and apply them to the affected areas. You can also wrap poultices in a thin layer of gauze before applying. The liquid can be used as an infusion or a soak (see below).



WASH

also called a SOAK

This is an infusion (see p.35) which is reheated (never boiled) and then applied externally to the affected areas. Soak the area directly in the wash, or dip a clean cloth into the wash and apply it wherever needed.

PASTE

A paste is made by mixing the powdered herb (eg, golden seal root) with a small amount of water. The paste is then applied externally to the affected area.

VAGINAL DOUCHES AND "SITZ" BATHS



Vaginal douche kits are sold in drugstores. Douche with an infusion or strong decoction (about 2 cups) at body temperature. Do not over-use vaginal douches as this can disturb the vagina's natural bacteria. Pregnant women should not use douches. The douches we mention in this booklet are medicinal douches; avoid scented douches sold in pharmacies (the kind that make you "smell better") as they have been linked to Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID).

IMPORTANT : Always douche gently ; douching forcefully can worsen an infection by forcing it up into your uterus, which can then cause PID.

For male genitals, soak the infected area.

"BABY SYRINGES"

These are relatively large syringes (about an inch in diameter) with an opening at the tip—they do not have a needle. They can be used for inserting yogurt into the vagina or for douching. They can be found in many pharmacies.

35 Years of Fertility



We ovulate every 28 days. That's 15 to 20 times per year and at least 300 menstrual cycles in a lifetime... For those of us who sleep with fellas, that's thousands of opportunities for getting pregnant. It's normal to change your partners, mind and methods. It's normal to abort. It's normal to freak out!

These things make it even harder on us:

- Men's indifference, and their ignorance about their own fertility ; men are fertile all the time, and we're ultimately the ones who have to deal with it.
- The added responsibility of contraception and protection (against the HIV virus and STDs) which women have to take on themselves.
- The stress which results from having to constantly educate men about taking responsibilities for their bodies... and ours.



It can seem bleak at times... but keep in mind--lovers come and go. Your body is yours for the long haul. Be good to yourself above all, and if someone tries to persuade you otherwise, ask yourself who's interests they've got in mind. Our attitudes towards sex have changed. They've had to—it's a matter of survival. Don't think that women don't "get" AIDS: we do, in numbers increasing all the time. **Safe sex is essential and condoms offer the advantage of protecting against both the HIV retro-virus and unwanted pregnancies** (See safe sex, p.13). Many of us have found "enforcing" safe sex with our lovers hard. It's a drag listening to guys whine about condoms being uncomfortable or unsexy. It's even more of a drag being in conflict with the person you want to fuck, especially when you'd rather be fucking than arguing.

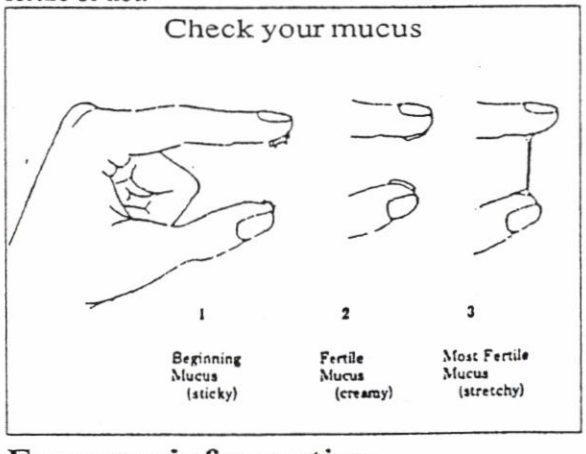
Helpful hints in case you don't follow this line:

- Never think you're infertile because you've never gotten pregnant when you have hardly used contraceptives, even over a long period of time.
- Avoid the Pill ; try to opt for alternative methods of contraception : condoms, cervical cap, diaphragm. While they may seem tedious to use, these methods offer the advantage of not disturbing your body's natural cycle. Take time to get to know your fertile periods by observing your cervical mucus and other signs of ovulation.
- It's important to figure out whether your cycle is regular or not, and to understand how it works. Don't worry if it takes you a while to figure it out. Your menstrual cycle is like a good friend—you get to know it better over time. This is a step toward

reproductive freedom and the reappropriation of control over our bodies. You may also find it useful to chart your periods on a menstrual calendar. It may be necessary to get your ovaries (etcetera) in better shape ; see "Hormonal Imbalance" (p.32) or "Cleansing Your Genitals" (p.33). Red raspberry leaf (p.47) is excellent for toning the uterus and ovaries.

Your vaginal mucus (or discharge) changes during the monthly cycle, and during ovulation it takes on very specific characteristics which allow a woman to know if she is ovulating or not. A sort of "mucus microscope" is available, to check if your cervical mucus is fertile or not. The microscope makes it easier to identify the various properties of your mucus. If you have a microscope, practising this is easy. Some health food stores sell the above gadget; problem is, it costs about $50. One solution is for women who live together to share it. Consult the references listed below to find out more about identifying the characteristics of your mucus. You can also examine it without a microscope.

Make sure to read up on this subject and get to know your cycle while using a reliable method of birth control, to make sure you can tell if your mucus is fertile or not.



For more information

The New Our Bodies, Ourselves (Updated and Expanded for the 90s). By the Boston Women's Health Book Collective: this is a good resource on women's health issues in general; this most recent edition has been expanded to include information on the mucus method and other alternatives to chemical contraceptives and medicines.

The Natural Birth Control Book. By Art Rosenbloom. Available from the Aquarian Research Foundation, 5620 Morton Street, Philadelphia PA, 19144 USA ; tel : (215) 849-3237.

Natural Birth Control. By Katia & Jonathan Drake : explains the temperature method.

Self-Help, Fertility and Birth Control : A feminist approach to determining ovulation. Available for $1.50 US from The Emma Goldman Clinic for Women, 715 N. Dodge, Iowa City, Iowa, 52240, USA.

For info on fertility awareness and natural birth control,

$60 a bottle, for a 7 day dose!

Tinctures are used diluted in warm water (about 15 drops in a little bit of water, 3 times a day).



To make your own tinctures

Tinctures are surprisingly easy to make.

- Always use fresh plant material : flowers, stems, leaves.
- Dried roots can be used but are not as potent as fresh ones.

Use a clean, dry mason (pickling) jar with a tight-fitting lid—it's not a bad idea to boil it first, to make sure it's sterile (let it dry out completely before starting your tincture). Do not wash or rinse plant material. Fresh roots can be scrubbed or peeled.

Coarsely chop the parts of the plant you are using (with the exception of small flowers). Fill the jar right up to the top. For dried roots : use 2 ounces (56 gr.) in a 500 ml (half litre) jar. Fill the jar with grain alcohol (which can be hard to find)—or use 45 % vodka or alcool. Vodka tinctures taste better but alcool is much cheaper (you can share the costs as well as the finished tincture among friends).

Use a knife to dislodge any air bubbles. Make sure to fill the jar to the top ; try not to leave any air (this can spoil the tincture, but don't worry if there's a tiny bit of air left).

Cap the jar as tightly as possible. Label the jar with the name of the plant used and the date. Make one tincture for each plant you are using. Every few days inverse the jar a few times. Store away from direct sunlight.

The tincture will be ready in 6 weeks. When it's ready, strain, squeeze and discard the plant parts. Store your tinctures in sterilized brown glass bottles, away from light and in a cool place.

Brown glass bottles with droppers can be bought in some health food stores ; these are used to measure the dosage. Use only glass droppers as plastic ones can be easily contaminated.

Useful tinctures to keep on hand are: valerian, echinacea, licorice, yarrow...

CAPSULES

Capsules use ground or powdered herbs (eg. cayenne pepper, ginger). You can buy empty gelatin capsules (size 00 to be precise) at health food or herb stores and fill them up yourself ; this is cheaper than buying the ready-made ones.



Strain the infusion when it is ready.

(NB : roots, bark, berries and seeds can also be prepared as decoctions ; see below.)

Never boil infusions, even when reheating them. Boiling destroys the potency of the plants.

Infusions can be preserved in the fridge for 2-3 days, in tightly capped jars. This way you can prepare them in advance, and reheat them as needed.



REGULAR DECOCTION

(for most roots and barks)

1 ounce (medium handful) of dried root or bark

2 cups cold water

Cover and simmer (slowly) for 20 minutes. **Do no boil.** Strain. Can be kept in fridge for 2 to 3 days.

Roots and bark can be soaked in the same amount of water overnight, before simmering ; this increases their potency.

Berries and seeds

Grind lightly

Use 3 teaspoons for every 3 cups of water

Cover and simmer 20 minutes. **Do no boil.** Strain and drink 3 cups per day.

NORMAL DOSAGE (ADULTS)

for infusions and decoctions

For infusions : 1/4 to 1 cup, 3 to 4 times a day (unless specified otherwise) ; dosages for each individual plant are specified in the chapter "Herbal Properties and Dosages".

For decoctions : 2 ounces (1/4 cup) 3 to 4 times a day (unless specified otherwise) ; dosages for each individual plant are specified in the chapter "Herbal Properties and Dosages".

It is recommended to take the herbs 6 days a week, for a period of 6 weeks. This process can be repeated several times (unless specified otherwise). We have to keep in mind that everyone's body reacts differently to herbs (according to weight, age, etc...) To adapt to our needs, we can slightly decrease or increase the quantities and duration of the treatments. Use your best judgement.

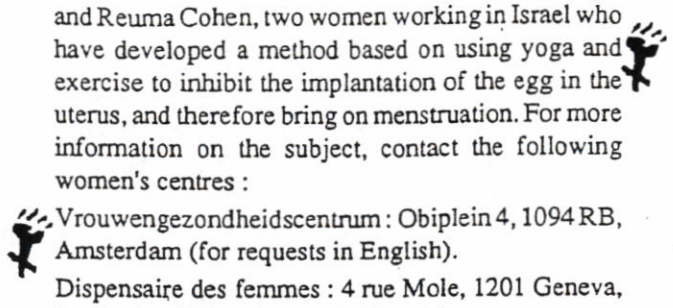


TINCTURES

Tinctures contain the alkaloid parts of the plant, extracted and preserved in alcohol. As they are concentrated herbal extracts, they remain potent for a long time, can be carried and ingested easily, are easy to prepare and act quickly. They are sold in herb stores and health food stores. While tinctures may seem expensive to buy (their prices range from $9 to $14 per dropper bottle), they last a very long time ; consider the fact that antibiotics can cost anywhere from $20 to

contact : Barbara Feldman, 342 E. 15th Street #D, New York, NY, 10003, USA

Check out the research and techniques of Aviva Steiner and Reuma Cohen, two women working in Israel who have developed a method based on using yoga and exercise to inhibit the implantation of the egg in the uterus, and therefore bring on menstruation. For more information on the subject, contact the following women's centres :



Vrouwengezondheidscentrum : Obiplein 4, 1094 RB, Amsterdam (for requests in English).

Dispensaire des femmes : 4 rue Mole, 1201 Geneva, Switzerland (for requests in French).

You can also check with your local women's centre for more info.

After a Risky Sexual Encounter



(These are not methods of birth control and should not be used on a regular basis)

If you do have unprotected sex, or if the condom breaks, the following methods can help prevent an unwanted pregnancy. VIT C MUST BE ABSORBIC ACID

- In the first moments following risky sex (or if a condom breaks), insert one non-chewable Vitamin C tablet (ideally a 500 milligram tablet) into the vagina. The acidity will change the pH-balance in the vagina and prevent sperm from staying alive. Dosage : 1 to 2 tablets inserted into the vagina every 12 hours, for 3 days. This may burn or cause vaginal irritation ; in this case, follow the yogurt treatment (see "Yeast Infections", p.27). Take high dosages of Vitamin C orally (see "A Simple Way of Bringing on Your Period", p.17). This is a good method to use when you're travelling, or as an emergency method.
- Wild carrot seed (p.49) can be used to avoid unwanted pregnancies by preventing the fertilized egg from attaching itself to the uterine wall. Dosage : 1 teaspoon of seeds every day, starting at the time of ovulation or immediately after unsafe sex during the fertile period. Some women take the seeds for one week, others until bleeding begins. You can chew on the seeds, take them in a glass of water or juice, or swallow them in gelatin capsules. Make sure that the seeds you buy have not been chemically treated, as this destroys their effectiveness.



A Simple Way of Bringing on Your Period

(If you suspect an unwanted pregnancy)

This recipe should not be used on a regular basis, nor as a method of contraception. It is easy to prepare, costs almost nothing, and it is not known to have side

effects.

The best time to begin the treatment is on the day that you were supposed to begin menstruating (or the next day).

The treatment lasts 3 days.

1. Insert a sprig of fresh parsley as far as possible into the vagina. Change the parsley every 12 hours. When soft, it may be difficult to remove, but this is not dangerous.
2. At the same time, drink parsley infusions (see p.46).
3. During these 3 days, take high doses of Vitamin C orally. The ideal dosage is 500 milligrams every hour (6000 mg per day) for up to 6 days. Vitamin C can bring on menstruation even three weeks after a "late" period. You can begin taking Vitamin C orally immediately after unsafe sex.

If successful, you should start to bleed within two or three days. You should know that :

- You may have cramps when you first start to bleed; take ginger infusions (p.44) as needed.
- That chances of this method working are lower for women who regularly take high doses of Vitamin C.
- That this treatment is not advised for women with kidney problems.

How to Bring on a Period Using Emmenagogues



(Emmenagogues are herbs which encourage menstrual flow by promoting uterine contractions)

These methods are not to be used as contraceptives. The recipes here use more concentrated combinations of herbs and are designed to induce a miscarriage. These plants can be used if you wish to abort naturally, but must be used in the manner indicated here. We provide these recipes knowing that only a few women will be able to use them under their optimal conditions.

It's important to know that the earlier you use these herbs, the more effective they'll be, but one condition is absolutely necessary : you have to be at the end of your cycle. This means that they will not work right after ovulation, as it is not possible to eliminate the fertilized egg before it has adhered to the uterine wall. Some herbs such as wild carrot seed can be used to prevent the fertilized egg from attaching itself to the uterine wall (see p.49).

You should begin drinking the teas the night before menstruation is to begin ; on that day, or up to 6 days afterwards—but not later! You may want to have a pregnancy test to verify whether you are really pregnant or not. These plants are not toxic, but keep in mind that if they can cause a miscarriage, they are certainly able

How to Prepare & Use Herbs

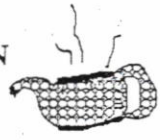


Preparing herbal tea for taste and pleasure is not the same as preparing herbal infusions and decoctions for medicinal purposes. Avoid using pots, pans or utensils made of aluminum. Go for enamelled, stainless steel or glass pots with wood utensils. Use filtered or spring water for more potent potions.

Note that there are several different ways to prepare infusions, decoctions, tinctures, etc. Opinions on what constitutes an infusion or decoction can vary from one herbal therapist or practitioner to another. What we have chosen to do is to provide the easiest methods of preparation, while ensuring potent and effective treatments. **This is good for dried herbs, use slightly more when they are fresh.**

If you do want to further explore the subject of plant preparation, consult the Herbal Pharmacy section of either of Susun S. Weed's two books (see "Interesting Reading" p.50). They are excellent.

REGULAR INFUSION



for most flowers, leaves and stems

A very basic method

2 cups of boiling water per 1 ounce (large handful) of herbs, leaves or flowers. **This is good for dried herbs, use slightly more when they are fresh.**

Add plant material to boiling water ; remove from heat and cover. Infuse (steep) for at least 20 minutes and strain.

Another method

NB : This method is more effective as it extracts more of the plant's medicinal properties.

Use 2 ounces (2 large handfuls) of the plant parts you need per every 4-5 cups of water used (or 1 ounce of plant per 2-3 cups water).

Bring the water to a boil. Put the plant material in a mason (pickling) jar. Pour the boiling water into the jar over the plant material ; try to leave as little air as possible. Screw the lid on tightly. Let it steep at room temperature:



- for flowers : 2 hours
- for leaves : 4 to 6 hours
- for flowers and leaves : 4 hours
- for seeds and berries : 30 minutes
- for roots and bark : 8 hours or overnight

Aphrodisiacs



Most of the plants mentioned in this section are spices. They work on the erogenous centres by carrying an intense flow of blood to the peripheral organs, which in turn leads to sexual stimulation. Because of their strong aroma and the increase in energy provided, spices excite sensoral perceptions... Definitely worth trying!

CINNAMON (stick or powder form)

- Soak 20 gr. of cinnamon in one litre of sweet wine for 10 days and drink two small glasses every day.

or

- Simmer 20 gr. of cinnamon with a few cloves for 15-20 minutes in one litre of good red wine ; sweeten with honey and drink 1 cup as desired.

GINGER

- Grate a good quantity of the fresh root, add to water and simmer covered for twenty minutes. Drink a small cup after meals. This also improves digestion.

CLOVES

- Mix half a teaspoon of powdered cloves with honey. Use it like jam.

or

- Infuse 2 or 3 cloves in one cup of boiling water. Steep twenty minutes. Drink 1 to 2 cups per day.

or

- Steep 2 to 3 cloves in one cup of good hot red wine for a few minutes; add some lemon rind, cinnamon and a pinch of nutmeg.

ROSEMARY

- Steep one handful in boiling water. Drink 2 to 3 cups every day.

or

- Infuse 50 grams of leaves and branches in 1 litre of dry white wine for 10 days. Drink 2-3 small glasses every day.

SAVORY

- Infuse one handful in boiling water ; drink 3 cups per day.

or

- For very efficient results, pour 4 to 5 drops of savory essential oil on a piece of sugar. Take every day or as needed.

CHINESE HERBS

Ginseng and royal jelly are also aphrodisiacs and tonics. Available (and less expensive) in Chinese herbal stores, ginseng is used in Chinese medicine to strengthen the elderly and is always used carefully. Seek advice from the salesperson.

NB : Ginseng is commonly used for men, royal jelly for women.



to damage an embryo. You can use these recipes if you are sure that you can obtain a medical abortion if the herbs do not work. If you are sure you are pregnant, make an appointment for an abortion and then cancel it if these recipes succeed.

If you know you are pregnant and are sure that you want to terminate the pregnancy, act as quickly as possible. Women who are aware of their cycles have greatest chances of success. These recipes are not miraculous, but if you do them early enough, chances of succeeding are fairly good.

Use only one of the following 2 recipes.



Emmenagogue recipe #1

Ingredients

Motherwort, mugwort, goldenseal root, blue cohosh root, fresh ginger root.

Pennyroyal can be substituted for mugwort, however, it is hard to find in many parts of Canada (especially in Québec). PENNYROYAL IS SAFEST. DRY ONLY OIL CAN KILL YOU. TAKE 1/4 - 1/2 PENNYROYAL A DAY. IF DIZZY, LOWER DOSAGE.

1. Infuse : 1/2 ounce (14 grams.) of motherwort (a medium-sized handful) and 1/2 ounce (14 gr.) of mugwort (a medium-sized handful) in 2 or 3 cups boiling water ; steep covered on low heat for 20 minutes and strain.

2. Make a decoction of 1 ounce (28 gr.) of blue cohosh root in 2 cups of cold water. Simmer on low heat for 20 minutes (covered) and strain.

3. Mix the infusion (from step 1) and the decoction (from step 2) together.



Dosage

Drink hot, 1/4 cup, 4 to 5 times per day, or drink a total of 1 and 1/2 cups per day, taking a small amount every hour. YOU WANT TO KEEP IT IN YOUR BODY AT ALL TIMES. IT IS BEST TO SIP THROUGHOUT THE DAY. SET YOUR ALARM EVERY 1-2 HOURS THROUGH THE NIGHT + DRINK TEA

In addition

Take 2 goldenseal root capsules 3 times a day ; chew on fresh ginger and/or drink as many ginger infusions (p.44) as possible.

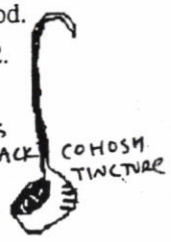


Keep in mind

- The infusion tastes rather awful ; add honey.
- Stop taking the mixture as soon as you start bleeding, or after taking it for four days with no results.
- Most women should begin menstruating within 48 hours or so after beginning the treatment.
- You should know that these herbs can cause contractions and/or dizziness ; lots of rest is advised. They may also induce nausea and/or vomiting ; eat lightly.
- Do these treatments with a friend. They can check your progress, give support, massage, keep you sane,

etc.

- Practice has shown that the more advanced the pregnancy, the more severe the side effects. We stress once again that this treatment should not be done more than 6 days after a missed period.
- See note "**Important**" following recipe #2.



Emmenagogue recipe #2

Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons dried blue cohosh root.
- 3 tablespoons dried pennyroyal leaves.
- 2 tablespoons dried tansy leaves and flowers (or leaves from the plant in flower). TANSY OFTEN CAUSES HEMORRAGE!

Put the blue cohosh root into 6 cups of water and bring it to a boil. As soon as it boils, add the remaining herbs, cover and remove from heat. Let it steep for at least 30 minutes. Strain out the herbs and reheat (do not boil) before using. Dosage : 1 cup, as hot as possible, every 3 to 4 hours for no more than 5 days. Drinking this recipe while sitting in a hot bath increases its effectiveness.

Side Effects : same as for emmenagogue recipe #1 (see above).

Important : Even though complications are very, very rare, if you experience any of the following symptoms after using one of these recipes, go to a hospital immediately : extremely severe nausea, very high fever (103-104 degrees f), hemorrhaging (soaking through more than 2 pads an hour for over 4 hours). In the case of an incomplete miscarriage (indicated by passing large blood clots and/or hemorrhage), a D & C (dilation and curettage or scraping of the uterine wall) may be necessary.

Emmenagogue recipes numbers 1 and 2 should not be used together. You can take ginger infusions (p.44) or eat fresh ginger root while using emmenagogue recipe #2.



Other Emmenagogues

- Tansy leaves and flowers (p.48) can be taken in infusion or tincture to bring on a miscarriage. This plant helps stimulate menstrual flow. Dosage : 1 cup of infusion every 2 hours or 10-15 drops of tincture in warm water every 2 hours.
- Pennyroyal (p.46) can bring on a miscarriage by causing uterine contractions. Prepare an infusion of pennyroyal leaves and drink it as hot as possible—you can drink it while sitting in a hot bath. Maximum dosage : 4 cups per day for no more than 5 days. A teaspoon of brewer's yeast in each cup helps increase the effectiveness of this plant. **Never ingest pennyroyal oil; it is highly toxic and can cause death (no joke!).**

NB : Some or all of these symptoms may be present in women who go off the Pill—sometimes for up to 6 months.



What to do

- Use a combination of licorice root, red raspberry leaves and rose hips:

1. Make a regular decoction (p.36) using 1/2 ounce licorice (14 gr.) and 1/2 ounce rose hips, in 4 cups cold water.

2. Make a regular infusion (p.35) using 1 ounce (28 gr.) of red raspberry leaves in 2 or 3 cups of boiling water.

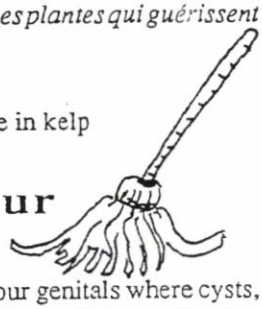
3. Strain and mix the two preparations.

Dosage : 1/4 cup 3 times a day. Do this treatment for 6 weeks ; stop for 3 weeks and start again as needed. An easier way is to use all these plants in tinctures, available in health food stores. Take 5 to 10 drops of each herb tincture 2 to 3 times a day.

Other, more elaborate treatments are available but are too long to list here. Consult *Des plantes qui guérissent* by Marie Provost.

Diet

Eat seaweed regularly or take in kelp capsules every day.



Cleansing Your Genitals

The following herbs cleanse our genitals where cysts, adhesions, fibroids, etc. take refuge... This combination of herbs will help in cases of painful, irregular, overly heavy or absent periods and sometimes, infertility.

What to do

Prepare an infusion with yarrow, red raspberry leaves, and fresh ginger root (grate an inch or two of ginger). Use 1 ounce (28 gr.) of red raspberry leaves (p.47), 1 ounce of yarrow (p.49) and ginger in 6 to 8 cups of water. Dosage : 1/2 cup 3 times a day. Also take 1 capsule of cayenne pepper (p.42) 3 times a day.

Follow this treatment for 6 weeks. Considering the fact that cleansing is a slow process (it takes at least as much time to cleanse ourselves as it took for the system to clog up), stop the treatment for 3 weeks and start again for a 6 week period as needed.

Here again we can make it easier on ourselves by taking the herbs in tincture form (5 to 10 drops of each plant, 2 to 3 times a day) ; combine this with infusions of ginger (p.44) or eat the fresh grated root.

- Drink lots of water with all of these treatments.

Again, other, more elaborate treatments are available but are too long to list here.

For further reading

Des plantes qui guérissent. By Marie Provost.

Wise Woman Herbal for the Childbearing Year. By Susun Weed.

problems (such as gas and constipation) are often confused with pain from cysts.

- For pain : valerian (p.48) in tincture as needed.
- If pain persists see an homeopath or a naturopath, or seek medical attention.

Fibroids in the Uterus

Most of the time these are benign, but they do have a tendency to grow larger during the cycle. After menopause the tumors usually diminish and disappear. Twenty to thirty per cent of women over the age of 30 have fibroid tumors. Sometimes a vigorous exercising program will get rid of them. If the fibroids grow fast, are large and painful or press on the bladder and the colon they must be surgically removed. Aside from exceptional cases, this does not mean that a hysterectomy is needed but rather a myectomy—that is, the fibroid tumor alone is removed.

What to do

- Try cleansing your genital organs (p.33).
- Stimulate blood circulation by taking cayenne pepper capsules (p.42) and try this drastic method : sit in a tub of cold water every morning for 2 to 5 minutes (or even longer if possible).
- A diet incorporating lots of raw vegetables is recommended.
- Valerian (p.48) as needed for pain.
- Be patient!



Varicose Veins on the Cervix

Visible with a speculum, they are thin, purple, spindly veins which resemble varicose veins on the legs. They tend to be painful before menstruation.

What to do

- Cayenne pepper (p.42) for the whole month or the few days before menstruation.
- Vitamin E (nuts, bran, wheat germ) and vitamin C.

Hormonal Imbalance

You may experience an hormonal imbalance due to menopause, taking the pill, losing large amounts of weight and serious stress.



Hormone imbalances can result in:

- Missed periods.
- Unusually short or long periods ; unusually light or heavy flow.
- An extremely long or short menstrual cycle (eg., getting your period every 10 to 21 days, or every 35 to 42 days).
- Severe PMS or heavy cramping before and at the onset of menstruation.

Note: Infortunately pennyroyal is hard to find in many parts of Canada, so grow your own!

Things you should know

- Make sure you choose good-quality dried herbs.
- Visualization and meditation help when using emmenagogues ; imagine the egg being dislodged from the uterus and then expelled. Having someone massage or press down on your lower abdomen can help stimulate uterine contractions and induce menstruation.



- Alcohol, sugar, nicotine and caffeine all interfere with the body's ability to absorb herbs. Try to minimize your intake of these substances during the course of these treatments.
- Drink lots of water when using any of the recipes and herbs listed above.

Do not, under any circumstances, exceed the recommended dosages. Once again, even though complications are very, very rare, if you do experience any of the following symptoms after using these recipes, go to a hospital immediately : extremely severe nausea, very high fever (103-104 degrees f), hemorrhaging (soaking through more than 2 pads an hour for over 4 hours). In the case of an incomplete miscarriage (indicated by passing large blood clots and/or hemorrhage), a D & C (dilation and curettage or scraping of the uterine wall) may be necessary.

References

The Wise Woman Herbal for the Childbearing Year. By Susun S. Weed (Ash Tree Publishing. Woodstock. New York) : while designed for women who want to have a baby, the first section deals with herbal methods for avoiding and terminating an unwanted pregnancy. And should you ever change your mind and decide you would like to conceive, this book is a very helpful guide to a healthy pregnancy and childbirth.

Take Back Your Life. A Wimmin's Guide to Alternative Health Care. By Alicia non Grata. Profane Existence Collective, P.O. 8722, Minneapolis, MIN 55408, USA (Send $2 US).



STDs & Other Aliens



It's a good idea to go for regular gynecological check ups ; if a problem is diagnosed, you can then decide not to treat it with chemical pills or creams. You should also have Pap tests done on a regular basis (once a year, in most cases).

Chemical antibiotics are not advised (especially if you've already taken them a number of times) because they tend to weaken the immune system (and your defenses against other illnesses in addition to the one you are treating).



Though you may want to avoid medical treatment, clinics offer tests for the problems and STDs mentioned in this section. Some of their symptoms are very similar, and it's best to determine which STD you have before treating yourself with herbal remedies. Certain STDs such as gonorrhea can result in pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), infertility and other complications if left untreated. If these treatments do not work for you, be sure to see a good gynecologist for medical treatment.

The treatments suggested on the following pages are plant-based : some of them are natural antibiotics that strengthen the immune system to combat disease or infection. This explains why the treatments can last a long time. Their effectiveness, however, is high as these plants cleanse the body while diminishing the chances of reinfection. Even if you're pretty sure you've gotten rid of the infection, get a test after completing an herbal treatment just in case you still have undetected symptoms.

Get a hold of a speculum. Ask your gynecologist ; if she's cool, she'll give you one. Examine yourself with a mirror and a flashlight. It's always worth it to visit a new part of your body! Smell, taste, touch. You'll quickly be able to tell what's not quite right. Most infections can be detected before symptoms such as vaginal discharge and itching appear. Once you become familiar with the normal, healthy state of your vagina, a vaginal exam using a speculum allows you to detect the first signs of an infection. You'll be able to spot parts of the vagina or cervix that are redder than usual, or notice small red marks on the cervix. You can also get together with friends and check each other out. This is a good way to compare and exchange experience. The references provided at the end of this chapter provide sources of information on self-examinations.

The Ovaries & the Uterus



Ovarian Pain

This usually comes between the 10th and 15th day of the cycle (counting from the onset of menstruation). A sharp pain on either or both sides of the lower abdomen means that the egg is being released with difficulty. This can also cause spotting. While there may be internal inflammation, it is usually tension that causes pain.

What to do

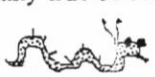
- Keep a hot water bottle on the lower abdomen.
- Take an infusion of ginger (p.44) or red raspberry leaves (p.47) or celery seed (p.42) or valerian (p.48) for pain if need be.
- Exercise.
- Improve or modify your diet (see suggestions in the sections "Premenstrual Syndrome", p.8 and "Dysmennorhea or Painful Periods", p.10).



Ovarian Cysts

Medical science tends to over-dramatize and too often treats cysts with surgery. Cysts are quite common and in some women they appear regularly throughout the course of their menstrual cycles. Tiny at first, they become larger during the cycle and then decrease in size. The most common signs are severe pain, urine retention, discomfort around the anus when shitting and constipation.

NB : Cysts that do not go away may require long-term treatment, and even medical attention, as they can become malignant ; this is especially true of cervical cysts.



What to do

- A diet based on raw vegetables combined with daily exercise encourage cysts to dissolve.
- Red raspberry leaf tea (p.47) taken for 3 to 6 months improves the overall state of the ovaries and reduces inflammation of cysts (because they taste good; raspberry leaves are easily taken for long periods of time).
- If the cysts are really bothering you, take 3 capsules of cayenne pepper (p.42) every day, as well as infusions of yarrow (p.49) for 6 weeks, accompanied by infusions or tinctures of red raspberry leaves. Do this treatment as needed.
- Chickweed (p.42) in tincture form is very effective for dissolving cysts, especially ovarian cysts, when taken over long periods of time.
- Check the quality of your digestion : intestinal

douche too often. Take valerian (p.48) to relieve discomfort if need be.

or

- Echinacea (p.43) for 3 weeks followed by golden seal (p.45) for 1 week. It is recommended that you take these herbs in tincture form to facilitate their absorption. Take a one-week break and repeat the same "pattern" 2 more times. Do this with your partner.

Douche with golden seal as needed if there is a lot of discharge and itchiness. Valerian (p.48) relieves discomfort as needed.

- Douche with water and clay : put 6 tablespoons of white clay into a pint of lukewarm water. Let the clay settle at the bottom of container. Do not stir. Use enough water to douche with, do this once a day or as needed for 5 days. Avoid metal utensils when using clay.

Douching with clay water has proved to be effective in healing most types of vaginitis.

- In case of gonorrhea or syphillis you'd be well advised to consult a naturopath, herbalist or homeopath, and if necessary, a gynecologist.

Remember, though you may want to avoid medical treatment, many clinics offer tests for the problems and STDs mentioned in this section. Some of their symptoms are very similar, and it's best to determine which STD you have before treating yourself with herbal remedies. Certain STDs such as gonorrhea can result in pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), infertility and other complications if left untreated. If these treatments do not work for you, be sure to see a good gynecologist for medical treatment.

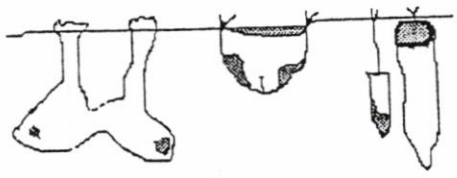
References

For more info on candida (especially for women who are prone to yeast infections), contact the Candida Research Information Service at (416) 832-0789.

For specific symptoms and diagnosis, information on using a speculum, consult *The New Our Bodies, Ourselves (Updated and Expanded for the 90s)* by the Boston Women's Health Book Collective.

Take Back Your Life : A Wimmen's Guide to Alternative Health Care by Alicia non Grata, published by Profane Existence (address in "Interesting Reading" section at the end of this booklet).

Natural Healing in Gynecology by Rina Nissim (1984, Édition Dispensaire des femmes).



If you decide to take chemical antibiotics, you're bound to get a yeast infection. Eat lots of plain natural yogurt (the kind with active bacteria) to restore the vagina's natural pH balance . Avoid acidic fruits and sugar. Vaginal yogurt tablets or acidophilus tablets can also prevent yeast infections. Or with the help of a speculum you can insert yogurt into the vagina using a small spoon or a large "baby syringe" (one which doesn't have a needle—p.38). Red raspberry leaf tea (p.47) or yarrow (p.49) can be used to restore equilibrium to the genitals after taking antibiotics. Take these for a month or more.

When consulting a physician or gynecologist, it's not a bad idea to get a second opinion and find out if it's absolutely necessary to treat your condition with chemical medicine (unfortunately, sometimes it is). Ask about alternatives-- sympathetic doctors will understand your concerns.

Most doctors push antibiotics on us for even the most minor problems and pharmaceutical companies make a huge profit from this. We don't have to support them. Herbal medicine has proved itself for centuries... and the choice is yours.

If you have an infection or STD, it's important that both you and your sexual partner(s) follow these treatments as STDs are easily passed back and forth—this will help you avoid reinfection after completing a treatment. Men can heal themselves with these treatments by taking the herbs in infusion or tincture form (refer to specific notes in text).

Keep in mind that practising safe sex can prevent the transmission of most STDs, and reduces the risk of reinfection after a treatment.

Crabs



Everyone, even small children can get crabs. They are tiny insect-like creatures that lay their eggs in clothes, sofas, bedding and carpets. Crabs cannot survive for more than 24 to 48 hours without a host to feed off of. **It's very important to destroy their eggs as well.**

Symptoms

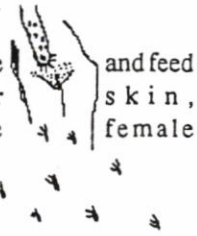
They itch! The itchiness is concentrated in the genital region and other hairy areas of the body (even the eyebrows). They are small, and their eggs look like tiny brown dots at the base of the hair.

What to do

- Clothes, towels, and bed linen should be washed in hot water and machine dried on a high setting. Rugs and carpets should be "quarantined" (kept out of contact) for 10 to 15 days, depending on the severity of the invasion.
- Thyme, red thyme (more potent) or lavendar essential

oils diluted in olive oil (2 to 3 teaspoons of essential oil for every 5 ounces or 142 ml. of olive oil) can be rubbed onto the infected areas (skin and hair) and left on all night. Wash off with soap. Repeat as needed. If it's especially bad, apply 3 times a day or more. Drink thyme infusions (p.48).

Scabies



Scabies are tiny parasites that live and feed under the outermost layer of our skin, digging long furrows where the female lays her eggs.

Symptoms

After an incubation period of several weeks, acute itchy spots will appear during the night. Scratching accentuates and spreads the red lines. Hands, between the fingers, wrists, elbows, armpits, the genital area and ankles are where scabies tend to hang out.

What to do

- Same treatment as for crabs, rub affected areas.

Genital Warts

While they are often called venereal warts, you don't necessarily get them through sexual contact. Whether it's on the cervix or on your finger, a wart is a wart. Warts can disappear without treatment but it's best to take action early. Their presence is said to reflect some sort of deficiency (vitamin, nutritional, etc.?). Warts will often appear during pregnancy or with vaginal infections and tend to disappear afterwards. Genital warts often resemble ordinary warts and sometimes appear to be shaped like a rooster's crown with white tips. They can grow internally and externally, in the anal and genital areas.

What to do

Doctors treat warts with a toxic cream, Podophyllin, or by harsher methods : electrolysis, liquid nitrogen, laser therapy or surgery. Ask for documentation.

A home remedy you can use before seeking medical intervention:

- Treat your immune system : three weeks of echinacea root (p.43) followed by one week of goldenseal root (p.45). Also douche with an infusion of goldenseal root once or twice a week ; this is effective against itchiness. Do the treatment for four weeks ; repeat if necessary after a three week break. You can take tinctures instead of infusions, as they are much more convenient for long-term treatments.
- You can also rub a clove of garlic, cut in half, directly onto the warts (if they are accessible). Try to do this two to three times a day for several months, and you should have positive results. You can douche with garlic (p.44) if you have warts on the cervix or inside

Trichomonas

This is a one-cell parasitic organism, often transmitted during sexual contact or by humid conditions. Frequent recurrence after menstruation.



Symptoms

Abundant yellowish discharge, unpleasant "fishy" smell, itching ; small red dots on the vaginal walls and on the cervix (visible with the speculum) ; thread-like secretions, sometimes foamy ; irritation around the vulva and the opening of the vagina.

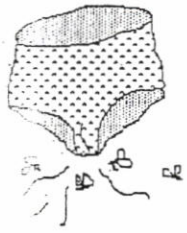
What to do

- Garlic cloves can be inserted in the vagina : try not to nick the clove when peeling it. Wrap it up in a cheesecloth or gauze (you can leave a "tail," which can then be used for easy removal, much like a tampon), and dip it in olive oil or almond oil to avoid irritating the mucous membrane. Change the clove 2 to 3 times a day for the first two days and then once in the morning and once at night for 5 to 6 days. Men can drink garlic infusions or take garlic tablets.

or

- Take golden seal capsules (p.45) orally. Do this treatment for two weeks. Accompany this treatment with vaginal douches of the infusion, once a day (p.38)—this gets rid of the itching. Reduce the frequency of douching for the second week.

Gardnarella



Symptoms

Greyish vaginal discharge with a strong smell.

What to do

Same treatment as for trichomonas.

Bacterial Infections & Gonorrhea

These problems indicate that the immune system has to be seriously treated and built up. Be patient ; the treatments can be long. These problems can recur frequently after the first attack ; it's better to get rid of them for good.

Symptoms

Very light greyish secretions, terrible smell, irritation or itchiness of the vulva. Often occurs without symptoms.

What to do

- Echinacea decoction or tincture (p.43) for 2 to 3 months, accompanied by a vaginal douche of the decoction 1 to 3 times a week until the vaginal discharge and itching have disappeared. Do not

reinfected through intercourse or hand-to-genital contact.



Causes

Nervousness, fatigue, pregnancy, heat, a sudden change in your life, a new sexual partner, stress, vitamin B deficiency, eating too much sugar, wearing tight-fitting or synthetic underwear... Antibiotics will often bring on a yeast infection as they wipe out many of the vagina's natural bacteria, allowing candida to reproduce in high numbers.

Symptoms

Thick, white discharge with a sweetish odor. Itchiness of the vulva or in the vagina followed by irritation and swelling of the labia. It gets worse if you scratch.

Treatment

- Plain natural yogourt is very effective. Insert it with a teaspoon (using a speculum if necessary). Wear a pad as the yogurt will flow out. Make sure to use unpasturized yogourt containing live lactobacilli. You can also use vaginal yogourt capsules. Acidophillus capsules work even better ; but as they are small, you should insert several capsules (2 or 3) into the vagina. They can be taken orally at the same time. Duration of the treatment: 5 to 10 days, preferably at night. In a crisis situation use yoghurt 3 to 4 times a day. "Baby syringes" will work well to insert yogourt and are available in drugstores. Yogourt can also be applied using those gadgets used for inserting spermicide with a diaphragm—they can sometimes be bought separately.

or

- Follow the garlic treatments indicated for trichomonas below.

Yeast infections are often asymptomatic in men. Men can get rid of yeast by rubbing yogourt and/or garlic on the penis every night for 7 to 10 days.



To treating itching

- Use one teaspoon of baking soda in one cup of water. Apply to the vulva as needed. Douche with garlic (p.44—this may burn if irritation is severe) or golden seal (p.45). Try not to scratch. Acidic vaginal douches with vinegar or lemon are also effective. Use 2 teaspoons in two cups of water. Douche twice a day for 2 days, then use the yogourt treatment (above) for a few days to rebalance the vaginal flora.

NB : Pregnant women should avoid douching.

Diet

- Avoid acid-generating foods (citris fruit, tomatoes, etc.), sugar, white flour. Eat foods rich in vitamin B (dark leafy vegetables). Eat large quantities of yogourt and raw garlic daily.

your vagina.

- Fresh chickweed (p.42) is very effective in dissolving warts over an extended period of several months. Eat the fresh plant or make an infusion (p.35). The only way to get fresh chickweed is to pick it yourself—it grows all over the city and in the countryside—see p.40 for things you should know about picking your own herbs.

Take note : Warts can be easily spread through hand-to-genital and genital-to-genital contact. Some women are more resistant to warts than others—you should take precautions : use a condom or dental dam if you or your partner is infected ; try to wash your hands before sexual contact, or (and this is a tough one) reduce hand-to-genital contact.

Women who have had warts should have a Pap test done twice a year.



Herpes

Herpes Simplex-II is very similar to Simplex-I (cold sores on the mouth and lips). It is said to affect only the genital region, but it can develop on any part of the body. The most common means of transmission is genital-to-genital contact, though herpes can also be passed from one person to another during mouth- or hand-to genital contact. Lesions will appear between two to 10 days after exposure, or more, accompanied by a fever and flu-like symptoms. Some women will experience an outbreak instead of the flu, before or after menstruating, and when under stress. Herpes is a virus, which means that it lives in your system and can reappear. Women who have herpes may want to avoid chocolate, nuts, caffeine, sugar and alcohol in order to prevent outbreaks (see below).

What to do

Infrequent recurrence (once or twice a year)

Take goldenseal root capsules (p.45) at the onset of the outbreak and for two weeks afterwards. Repeat if the outbreak reoccurs.



Very frequent recurrence

The immune system must be treated for a long time (up to 1 year). Take echinacea root (p.43) until the problem is gone. Use a tincture to facilitate absorption. Another good remedy for herpes is garlic, taken in capsules or tablets. Take a high dose (12 capsules) at the onset of an outbreak (characterized by a tingling sensation), and then three capsules every 4 hours for 3 days. It is recommended that you maintain a dosage of 4 to 6 capsules a day for up to a year after the initial treatment. Kyolic garlic tablets are suggested as they are easily digested and have no odor.

During the outbreak

Take baths, walk around naked (fresh air dries out sores). Apply white clay and let it dry several times a day ; clay heals and helps relieve pain. Rest. Relax.

Diet

- Grapes are advised for their anti-viral properties, concentrated in their skins.
- Brewer's yeast (in tablets). Reminder : this is not advised for women who are prone to yeast infections.
- Vitamin C, vitamin A, vitamin E.
- Take 800 to 1000 milligrams of lysine daily for one to two weeks—not longer. You can repeat this treatment after two week's break.
- Try to understand what triggers an attack : stress, depression, which foods, clothes, menstruation, etc... and try to avoid what you can.
- Avoid coffee, chocolate, nuts, sugar and alcohol.
- Take lots of garlic (fresh and in tablets or capsules).

For more information about herpes, consult *The New Our Bodies, Ourselves*. By the Boston Women's Collective.

Bladder & Urinary Infections



Symptoms

Having to pee all the time, pressure in the bladder, feeling the urge to pee but nothing comes (or maybe just two to three drops), blood in the urine, dark urine with a strong odor. Be careful, these signs may be indicative of a more serious infection such as Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID). Check with a doctor if you're not sure.

Causes

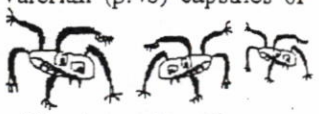
Imbalance in the intestinal bacteria, wiping from back to front, nylon underwear, chemical foams, stress, cold, anal penetration followed by vaginal penetration without cleaning the fingers, penis or sex toy in between.



What to do

- For those who consistently suffer from this type of infection, drinking cranberry juice daily is a must. Drink a sixteen ounce glass hourly at the first signs of an infection. This will usually stop it in a couple of hours. Continue drinking 16 ounces of cranberry juice at least twice a day for prevention. If nothing but water is available drink a sixteen ounce glass hourly, and make sure you are drinking at least eight glasses a day after that.
- Bearberry (p.41) in infusion or tincture is very good. You'll probably feel like your bladder is going to burst but it's sure to get rid of the infection.
- Take yarrow (p.49) in infusion or tincture.
- Try a more alkaline diet comprised of fruits, almonds, leeks, turnips and barley. Avoid coffee, tea, meat, white flour, sugar and acid generating foods.
- In addition, take goldenseal capsules (p.45) for two weeks.
- In case of pain, take valerian (p.48) capsules or tincture as needed.

Chlamydia



Chlamydia often occurs without symptoms in many women. Its presence is indicated by an infected cervix with a yellowish color (check with a speculum), a burning sensation when urinating and heavy vaginal discharge. You can also contract chlamydia in your throat during oral sex. If you suspect that you may have contracted chlamydia, or if you're not sure of your symptoms, have a test done. If gone untreated over a long period of time, chlamydia can lead to long-term complications like PID.

What to do

Take echinacea (p.43) twice a week for 3 weeks. Take echinacea in tincture to facilitate absorption. Douche with a decoction of echinacea, twice a week for 3 weeks. In addition, eat raw garlic or take garlic capsules every day. Duration of the treatment : 1 to 2 months, depending on the severity of the infection. After the treatment has ended have another test done to make sure the infection is really gone.

Vaginitis & Vulvitis



This is a catch-all term for several disorders : yeast infections (candida), trichomonas and gardnarella. These conditions are inflammation of the vagina and of the vulva ; they depend upon many factors and are not caused exclusively by sexual intercourse. Spermicide, antibiotics, latex and perfumed soaps can induce vaginitis or vulvitis in certain women. Sensitivity to these and other irritants varies with each and every woman. Specific causes and their treatments follow.

Yeast Infections & Candida



This infection is caused by a yeast-like fungus (called candida) normally found in the vagina. The vagina usually protects against infection through the production of bacteria which maintain its natural acidity. When this acidity is altered, it allows bacteria such as candida to multiply in large numbers, causing the infection.

Yeast infections are not considered a sexually transmitted disease but they can be transmitted during sexual intercourse. If you have a yeast infection, penetration of any sort (penis, sex toys, fingers) is not recommended (even with a condom) since it can aggravate the irritation.

Wash your hands and genitals after any sexual contact with an infected partner as it is very easy to become